Sulfur 3

FEATURING: *PASSAGES*, IN BLOOD'S DOMAIN
BY ROBERT DUNCAN ▲ THE FINAL CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN CHARLES OLSON AND EDWARD DAHLBERG

CHAMBORD

Restaurant de Classe

☆ ☆ ☆

Superb French Cuisine - Friendly Reception
Elegant Service - Intimate Decor - Garden Patio

☆ ☆ ☆

Luncheon 11:30-2:30 Dinner 6-10-30 Closed Sunday
Extensive wine list
Reservations advised 652-6590
8689 Wilshire Blvd. Beverly Hills Valet parking

SULFUR, published tri-quarterly, is at Box 228-77, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA 91125. The present issue is Volume I, #3. Subscriptions $12 a year (three issues) for individuals, $18 for institutions; foreign subscriptions, including Canada, $15 a year. All payments from foreign countries must be made by U.S. money orders or checks payable in U.S. currency. Single copy $5.00. No manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

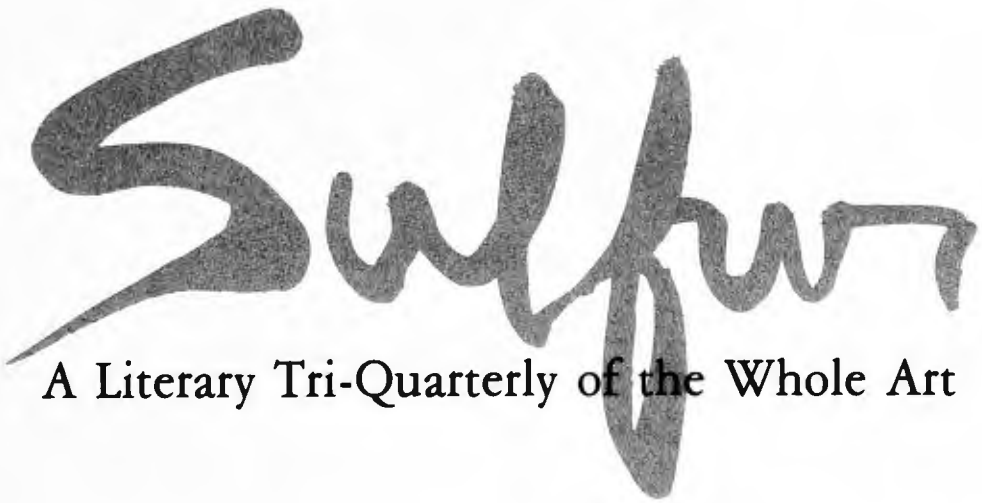
Logo by F.X. Feeney

Distributed in the U.S.A. and overseas by *Spring Publications*, Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 2719 Routh Street, Dallas, TX 75201; *The New York State Small Press Association*, Box 1264, Radio City Station, NY NY 10019; and by *Book People*, 2940 7th Street, Berkeley, CA 94710.

Copyright © Sulfur 1982

Cover by Arthur Secunda

A CLEAR SPACE, collage, 109 cm × 69 cm (43" × 27¼"), 1980



A Literary Tri-Quarterly of the Whole Art

CLAYTON ESHLEMAN, *Editor*
MICHAEL PALMER, JEROME ROTHENBERG,
ELIOT WEINBERGER, *Contributing Editors*
DENNIS PHILLIPS, *Book Review Editor*
ROBIN PALANKER, *Design*
LAUREL BURDEN, *Art Assitant*
CARYL ESHLEMAN, *Copy Editor*
IRENE BALDON, *Business Manager*

California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA 91125

CONTENTS

ROBERT DUNCAN: *In Blood's Domain* 4

RON SILLIMAN: *Skies* 6

ALLEN FISHER: *The artist's third monologue* 9

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS: *Ode* 15

BERNARD BADOR: *Four Poems* 20

ALISON WATKINS: *Five Poems* 26

KARIN LESSING: *Four Poems* 32

GERALD BURNS: from *A Book of Spells* 37

JOSE LEZAMA LIMA: *Ten Prose Poems* 40

GISELE CELAN-LESTRANGE: *Four Ink Drawings* 52

DAVID RATTRAY: *A red-framed print...* 56

SUSAN HOWE: *Pythagorean Silence* 57

MICHEL DEGUY: *Two Prose Poems* 65

LARRY EIGNER: *Four Poems* 71

LEONARDO SCIASCIA: *The Crowley Case* 75

BARBARA MORAFF: *Four Poems* 82

SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ: *The Fountain* 87

HOLLY PRADO: *Sky* 92

JEROME ROTHENBERG: *Two Poems* 94

FRANÇOISE JANICOT: *Photograph* 100

HAYDEN CARRUTH: *Who I Am* 101

ANDREW ROBBINS: *Three Poems* 107

MARK KARLINS: *Three Poems* 113

AUGUST KLEINZAHLER: *Five Poems* 116

The Letters of Edward Dahlberg and Charles Olson:
The Final Feud (1950-1955) 122

BOOK REVIEWS: Corman on Celan; Rasula on Watten, Bissett, Bromige and Cage; Watson on Harryman; Emerson on Bowles; Nakell on Barton; Weinfield on Bronk; Weinberger on Mexican Poets; Shreve on Rowles; Peters on National Poetry Series 224

Cover art by Arthur Secunda *A Clear Space*, collage, 109cm × 69cm, 1980

Our gratitude to Jim Haddad of Haddad Fine Arts Inc. at P.O. Box 3016 C, Anaheim, CA 92803, who printed the cover, and to Jere Wright.

Typeset at NewComp Graphics Center, a part of Beyond Baroque Foundation located in Venice, CA. NewComp
is partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Robert Duncan

PASSAGES
In Blood's Domaine

The Angel Syphillis in the circle of Signators looses its hosts to swarm
mounting the stem of being to the head
Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Swift
are not eased into Death the undoing of Mind's rule in the brain.
"Yet it is in spirit that nature is timelessly enveloped." And, as above, so below there are
spirtochete invasions that eat at the sublime envelope, not alien but familiars
Life in the dis ease radiates invisiblities devour my star

and Time restless crawls in center upon center cells of lives within life conspire
the Angel Cancer crawls across the signs of the Zodiac to reach its
appointed time and bringing down the carnal pride bursts into flower—
Swift, Baudelaire, Nietszche into the heart Eternal of what Poetry is
answer to the genius and science of the Abuss. The first sign of this advancing power
shows in Fear that goes clear to the bone to gnaw at the marrow
the seeres Lou Andreas-Salomé sees long before the hour arrives
[mais] "Tantôt sonnera l'heure où le divin Hasard,
où l'auguste Vertu, ton éspouse encore vierge" where black the infected blood
gushes forth from Rilke's mouth, from his nose, from his rectal canal
news his whole body bears as its truth of the septic rose
Où le Repentir même (oh! la dernière auberge!)

Lovely then
that Death come to carry you away from the moment of this splendor
that bursts the cells of your body like a million larvae triumphant
come to life in the fruit All the spreading seeds, the viral array
taking over flesh as the earth is it
scarlet eruptions
And the pneumatics torn in the secret workings of the Angel Tuberculosis
(No, I do not speak of the Evils or of Agents of Death but these Angels
are attendants of lives raging within life, und these Wings we dread
viruses, bacili come home to thrive in us o6u tout te dira
"Meurs, vieux lâche! il est trop tardi!" Die, you old coward,
It is too late. I feel the ringing of tomorrow's bell.

But what ate at Pound's immortal Mind? for the Cantos, for Les Fleurs de Mal—
what malady? what undoing-of-all-Good workt behind speech?
are the matter I come from: these poisons I must know the hidden intensions of
where "This coil of Geryon" (Djerion) said Mr Carlyle, who now becomes
Thomas Carlyle, not in Congress, but the genius of "Hero Worship" his (our) congress
And if I know not my wound it does not appear to suppurate? in this intercourse
"Adolf furious from perception" —does this though refer to Hitler?
Link by link I can disown no link of this chain from my conscience.
Would you forget the furnaces of burning meat purity demands?
There is no ecstasy of Beauty in which I will not remember Man's misery.
Jesus, in this passage (he is like a man coming forward in a hospital theater)
cries out: I come not to heal but to tear the scab from the wound you want to forget.
May the grass no longer spread out to cover the works of man in the ruin of earth.
What Angel, what Gift of the Poem, has brought into my body
this sickness of the living? Into the very Gloria of Life's theme and variations
my own counterpart of Baudelaire's terrible Ennuie?

Ron Silliman

Skies

for Alan Bernheimer

I

THE SKY IS A GREY PLANE tending toward white, without depth, without detail, barely with light. To the east tattered clouds patch the blue, but to the west a dense, grey bank of fog. Above, or to the east, the fine white mist is not visible-because-thicker, but against the background of the next yellow hill it rushes by in light puffs. Wisps, blowing east, no constancy of shape. Stillness in all directions, mountainous scoops of cloud. Pure hot blue air, little breeze. Clouds gather, but so slowly they go unnoticed. Heat will cause the plums to drop, white butterflies steaming up from pink roses, sun lighting cobwebs on the fence. The greys of the cloud are uneven, near-black folded into off-white, layerings. As the gray fades slowly to blue, all that remains are a few white cottony clumps, higher than the rest. Low damp cool fog, suspended rain. When the clouds rise, rain falls. The sun dissolves in the mist to a glare. A few small puffs of white are pushed by the breeze. What are you, Never-Very-There, so everywhere, emptying, wind's vessel, cloudherd? Invisible forces thrash the trees. Blue leaks in a white wall. But the grey wall is bricklike, composed of units of irregular shape, clouds high up against the sky. Today a herd of large ones, billowy with dark undersides, pass over as slow as ships. A window edits the sky. A lack of shading in the morning fog foretells its burning off. The light a dull white. The smell of rain. What from

the satellite photo is a spiral is unbroken sameness for days from the porch. First seen, blue is colorless, mere dark breakings in the sharp glare. Morning's damp lawn registers night's precipitation, struggling thru the thick rising fog. Deep greys mottle the dull sheen. As if the sky were a gray sponge pressed right to the ground. An outline as of a wing in white, alone against the blue, shreds. Heavy whites, restricted palette. The blue tower atop Portola Heights hidden by the fog, the row of trees immediately below reduced to a silhouette (the descent of the sky). Like a cold sweat, it sticks to your flesh. It rises like a veil, revealing all that surrounds you. The glare is intense, but colorless. One does not feel enclosed by blue. The wind belies a clear sky. Before dawn, light bleeds from the horizon. The sun bores a hole in fog. After the burnoff, a layer of alto-cumulus, grillwork. The song of birds without the sight of birds. Squint-light. In the morning the moon is in the west. The sun tentative amid clouds. One plane gives the sky proportion. The cloud mixes with the grasses. The sharp light of the sun wedged behind. Behind the cloud a pulse of light moves slowly west (a game of infinitely few parts). Today's cloud rises slightly, so that building & trees are clearly seen. You can smell it (rolling thru the streets). The moment, mid-afternoon, one fog finally burns off the first wisps of another begin to blow in off the sea. By the time the sun appears it's midway thru the sky. The next day, heavier & lower. Then thicker, cooler. Although not visible you can feel it. Just a thin line, brighter than all the rest at the horizon, a sign of its rising. The sky in the room is called air. Just enough haze to blanch the blue. They don't "break up" but drift apart, becoming slighter, dissolving into themselves. The gloom. In the clouds, clouds form & roil. One morning, it's as if this never happened, the hot sky brilliant & clear (sounds carry further on a windless day). Then it's not. The sun in the east bright amid light clouds, small & overlapping, but out the windows on the other side of the house the sky is one vast, black wall. Even in the middle of the clearest day, it's never the same

hue throughout. At the edge of the cloud mass, wisps & strands tatter & drift off, dissolving as they go. A white film, filtering & diffusing light, stretched over the whole sky. Where the cloud is its thinnest, the hint of a blue tint. Sun's light, even before it reaches the horizon, scatters thru layers & pockets of cloud. Cotton curtain, to soften the glare, room's morning lamp. In the valley between two small hills, birds fill the air. Scattered, small, these clouds push evenly, a slow parallel movement across the afternoon. Weekend pilots thread the sky (web of no design). The bird in the cage on the porch in the breeze is in it. Shadowless grey light of foggy morning. Tho nearby, these houses ebb in the damp cloud. It absorbs heat. Light is held in particles of moisture. Later, breezy gusts break it all up until one, standing on a porch high on a hillside, can barely make remnants out. Waking, even before you realize that you hear it, you recognize the sound of rain. It waits in the eucalyptus for the wind to shake it free. Grey or not or dark, the sky is without points of reference, hence any sense of direction, not contingent on the land or water below, save these clouds that never rest (imagine maps or satellite photos in which the clouds remained constant while the seas & continents changed shape hourly to accomodate this motion). Fuzzy drizzle, low stratus. A chill damp. The wind off the sea seems trapped below the clouds, pushed, rushing through the valleys & over the glistening surfaces of the low hills. Shaped, defined, by the houses, window, plum tree. Black tufts. Long, thin clouds seem airbrushed high against the blue, the sun coming up broken behind a dark, eastern cluster. The dew, streaming in the morning light, rises. Stars visible in the city. The fog settles (everything absorbs moisture). Just before dawn, delayed by a high bank of clouds to the east, the muted light transforms these hills to pastels (impressionism). The herds of wild stratus.

△

The artist's third monologue

The ground beneath me
    public burial site laid out garden
suburbs around the metropolis plague

Soon it will morning loss of
    an industrial sublime. Turn the light
on. Who turned the lights
    shifted the workers on-phase

After The Great Fire
    Evelyn regretted I was not allowed to take advantage
to rid the City of tombs

Walk the cracks the rain black
    paving separated
yellow syrup pulsings
scream of wishing on the surface of need
Threw a vase of violets from the skylight
shattered glass flowers
spreading in the wall

Cemetery suburbs costed by a land of absentee landlords
    tombs of Joint-Stock Companies
scales of charges for interment

How many particles released these nights this

sulphur dioxide dawn dissolves
in what organically-tempered angle

Sit still and hear this buzzing break the air

Catacombs, vaults, graves
Memorials, broken columns, tomb-houses
disinfected housing, frozen shopping centres,
cars scattered over underground parks
Altar-tombs, monumental urns, sarcophagi
Medallion portraits, insignia, flower beds
Neon signs, framed hoardings, bronzed slabs

Feudal and aristocratic life in christendom
selfishness and cruelty unsurpassed by pagan Rome

May 28th 1977 noted
Systems Organisation. Fertilisation
and Importation.
Emotion.

In digging the foundations for houses found
funeral urns
ashes of bones coins to hold eyes
broke Goodman's field burial ground to pieces
for us christians it was hot work

I stand fearless at the Barbican watchtower
between Ludgate and Fleet ditch
a museum to refine the remains

See Moorfields as site
of Britons in London
as "aboriginal establishment", Romans

broke remains to pieces

The held cracking
without space
moving
    aura
taking possession of trembling
Built underground shelter
on the bombed site

Stamped tiles repeating P-B-LON
Probatum Londinii
Proved of the proper quality of London
or the first Britons in London
Prima Britonium Londinii
making London seat
centre for provinciality
These tiles broken to pieces

Remains I gather amongst
shrapnelled wall scarred limbs
flickering lamps ruptured vessels
    throughout line of High street
bundles of telephone wires

Rummaged the ground
failed to discover traces Diana and Apollo temples
found sacrificing bowls bearing Diana's signifier
    in Woodward's cupboard
said found at St.Paul's

Night shifts up the hill the tower block's
shadow

Foster lane
excavating for New Goldsmith's Hall
fifteen feet below street in stratum of clay I came to
Stone altar of Diana
a tree the remains of inscription
a tripod
a sacrificial vessel a pig's skeleton
the temple once thought under St.Paul's
beneath Insurance foundations

Considerable remains the memory
Reedmont field, Islington
Suetonius Paulinus contested Boudica
Battlebridge
a trial of noble butchers
  determines who interprets my synthesis
financial backing making my decision

Within throes of stock exchange
the battle won
women skewered lengthways
in a wall parallel to Thames
the Old Steelyard
bone pins, styli, spatulae, iron keys
Roman bronze of a brilliant hue from damp
Bricks, coins, wood ashes
Inscription in runic KINA, common ancestor
instruments for torture
an equal number of remains from
Anglo-Saxon, Norman and Medieval nobles

6.a.m.	Genetic Disease in Man
6.20	History of the Macromolecule
6.40	Music Interlude

6.20 p.m. Bias and Judgement
6.40 History of Statistical Certainty

On pennies of William Rufus, another Isis
the mint asylum in Southwark
fragmented memories
tube train inscriptions into London Clay

Whatever you buy
there must always be one adult
paying the required fare
and at least one child
holding a ticket

From Alleyn's Bear Garden
walked through the burnt method of a nation
The Globe, The Rose, The Hope, The Swan
stages to cash speaker's memories
simple signifiers of complex faith
City Lead Works, Rose Cafe, Courage Brewery
replace these theatres
a maintenance shop converted into a Tudor tomb
for tourists at The Anchor
Clink coshes and chains on the walls
City Lead Works purchased by Shell Petroleum
to enhance their interests in distribution of tin

A hydrocarbon dawn numbs the questions
hammers breaking away the fettle
men unable to spit sixpence
women pouring ladled metal
their shins wrapped in protective paper

Elliotson's chemist its golden key

rubbled beneath laid out garden a cage
without trees

The pavement rain burns the metals
lifts children through the drain bare
into this overland sewer

"What Spectre of Prophecy, what delusive Phantom?"
not a bergamot to carve I LOVE

Pallets made to be flooring
over a graveyard of rats
stamped with a conservation order
    from the department of the environment

In repression of biological memory
in active faculties of forgetting
    a collective made
words instead of things
signs not effects

Traced directly on the body
a system of cruelty and selfishness
as natural
a mnemotechnics of torture
for a nation of bankers and banked
exhausted from the day's inscriptions
lay back to be signed and resigned

Graffiti on the garden wall
a fist and inscriptions
PUNKS RULE: WORKERS UNITE
on the bench three alcoholics
building a space-ship

Rachel Blau DuPlessis

Ode

I.

Interior of stone is stone of water, water in stone the lichen skein
in water, weft Stone interiors are emptiness spaced wide
all that be empty is all wavering full Interior of wood from want,
joined
of water, woven threads of void Dark over dark, dark
Arm-wings folded round the heart pulse within the heavy laden
blackness
of the long clicking night.

II.

Flute flow
follows
bluing, to chee
p̈ watery
Bronyx
cackle.
Thrush any
thrushway
feathers its nesting heart in
egg brown speckle
hatched from onyx night when
round down dawn sliver

silvers
rivers
o

III.

Toe tries
to twig
and then when
double double beat
it
flyz hup

One red reed reach
just one red
leaf just one
red
pœp
rd
ha

IV.

Be
needle's gold outpointing light thru fan-thin lines in leaves
in which reverberates the note hard hit: irradiated
love

whose every single
cell sounds all

as white, as light
the color chord entire;

each never-rounded
arcing shell
binds birth to ocean hearts
as much as burst with dark.

V.

Blue breath warbles watery fours
gold breath threes on earth
red spot tuneful voice from high
moist and dry
cold and hot

pulls the massy birth along
sequacious of the lyre's
leaf/leaf

VI.

Swung over by green star-luminous bugs
under hairy leaf under swollen leaf
half-hollow spots of living light
mistaking earth for heaven
so vast the ancient sounding
spheres so loose
the braiding flimsy
shimmer

everlasting you
over and under under:

black hold among holes hope among holes black
stones green flashy bugs woof
steady in the air that threaded planet plurals;

space, size,
affirm another orb or two;
hums up inside the wires in the neck
a warp dark tree

Muck heads in the mudrich mulch under
Night-fresh stars celestial sprouting over
specks of itchy antfast journeys
under earth's plain black bleak place and
white beaked over-eager
time:
those
underplayed and thrice displaced
designs,
random,

that untune the sky.

A Note about *The "History of Poetry"*

The poems here, in *Sulfur* 1, and elsewhere (*Paper Air*) are from a sequence called *The "History of Poetry,"* whose working title comes from a line in a critical article by Joanne Feit Diehl: "She cannot forget the history of poetry because it is not hers."

(*Feminist Studies* 6, 3) The sequence concerns my facing, being haunted by the Western Lyric tradition, speaking as a woman poet. "Woman" has always been a central site and icon for that lyric tradition as a specially stressed sign, rather more rich than a sheep or daffodil. One might say that the poetic tradition is made up of lyrical/social objects which incorporate women in various ways. These objects stand as paradigms on which my poems comment, with a desire precisely not to reaffirm the conventions or narratives and therefore the ideologies which we already know. As far as I can sum up here and now, my writing involves always trying to deform narratives, conventions and languages assumed to have magisterial status within our culture. One of the ways this occurs in *The "History of Poetry"* is by the insertion of lines from and references to other texts, with an eye to dissolving the older text as a canonical object. This has occured in the poems in *Sulfur*. Deformation, as I have been concerned with it in the myth poems in *Wells* (The Montemora Foundation, 1980) and here, is a struggle with the stuff that makes a text into a text: adequate grammar, understandability, culturally-resonant conventions, the charm of literary allusions, mandated sequences of events, sometimes even speech itself as opposed to aphasia, stutter, or the void. I might add that my poems have no desire or will (or power!) to stand as feminist-replacement-canonical-objects, but would by their presence criticize and resist that desire.

3 Sept. 81.

△

Bernard Bador

Progress

— Translated from the French
by Clayton Eshleman

The blinding of jacarandas heightened by summer's heavy cymbals.

The melody goes away to die under a rolling-mill of potato bugs, ardent myosoti spouses.

Under the flashes, faceless sucklings are flaying the dancers.

Turbid mutism of macaws quartered on a wheel of main-jibs, swollen with bear bites.

It is Tristan Tzara trampling the sacred wells of the peacock butterflies scythed by shamrock-machetes.

At the call of the termite-totems, pastel blue morays begin to lay tides, sleigh-bells pop under the murmering of heraldic sables.

O charisma of deluges! Hand-to-hand of turgescent mud into which asphyxiated walruses are sinking their tusks.

The Call of the Caverns

Tapir menses,
an orgasm for the blue ants
rescued from an abortive rutting
that evening
when the moon hanged itself from snow-capped
pussy sucker tongues.

Inanely happy, like a pregnant dense cloud,
the upright cyclops,
his member loaded,
blinds himself with vaginal oil
furrowed by the ovule of worlds.

In an intestinal pocket,
the opium-eater unfurls
the cloth of crimson flowers on the rock-like
rumbling of rejects on the raft of the Medusa
abandoned to the paralytic
calm of crepuscular spasms.

A band of sea-urchins,
praying in a stone garden,
have penetrated the mystery of rods,
killer ear-wigs
lodged under the moss of skulls,
sepulchres of mute musics.

A kleenex wipes
the amplitude of waves, a royal
crumple to dab out the eye's honey,
extractors of chimeres
weaned from treacherous scorpions.

A river grows numb,
malign jelly of grocery sorceresses
sewn at the four fears
of the fair of all men,
but the cockroaches,
do they—victims of defective
strata—ignore their executioners?

A necklace of heads,
torpor pendulums of subterranean
transfusions where sumps
strangle the light.
The agony of a bison—tornado of
guts and bellowings of stunned
hunters—has revealed
the communion of engravings
in the rock's grain.

Powerlessness

Only a song facing the red tide,
sweeper of pupils, miniatures of chaotic geneses.

But what can music and lyrics do
on the rotting enclosing-wall of our blind
hands groping among the foeti,
a pullulating cannibal tribe
on the alopecia areata of the sky?

From the bridge do you keep watch on the troubled
water, the mincemeat swarming with scabs,
scrofula hot for tender necks?

A man stretched on a crescent moon begs
the invisible archer to cut his ties to Hades,
to let him follow the arrow of fire.

But on night's mirror
only the vomitings of astrophagous gargoyles,
the faded reflection of the same old song.

End of the Walk

Carnival of rusted souls in search of moon
oil to lubricate this eye gear
buried under metallic moss. A note
breaking piano leads, briskly,
the diarrhea of disjointed shadows,
dried up stains where, papulous sequins,
the eggs of pythonesses, their breasts
swollen with curdled milk, are teeming.
Their secret desire remains: to sever
the bedbugs, that nibbling mass of tubercular
sun babies, off-springs, soul-orphans
flung to the rocks of oracles,
scrofulous peelings off eyes of glass.
Winds are choking there, a drowning
fanned by the bad breath of goats
defecating The Odyssey of Golden Guano.
Do you recall the sirens, those magpie
thieves, free of every cloud? One should
have listened to them; jagged
rocks of the flesh of ecstatic
victims—where can we find you?
Our wobbly incantatory dances raise
a dust of stingings in rut. Ah the titanic
wasp nest engulfer of the shipwreck of
the very last islets of refuge for
tentacle men! Painful contortions for a mere

drop of cervical sap. Bubbles
popping at the inert surface. Nothingness
wandering the deserter void of amnesiac
amnions sabering—to the blows of a scramasax—
a gluey colony of scolopendras, the question mark's
gaseous compositions of jealous gusts.

Bernard Bador's most recent collection of poetry is *Harakiri d'oursin* (Editions St.-Germain, Paris, 1981). He presently lives in Los Angeles. The poems here are from the manuscript of a selected poems of Bador, called *Sea-urchin Harakiri.*

△

Alison Watkins

Esperanto is the name of one who ridges the bright
hope of name. She is the arbitrary narration of
inner action. She is the behavior of a word-skein
language whose roots are common to no one

She becomes a bramble in the town of words
& in the city of broken conversation she turns
a blister on the blue feathers of the moon

into tears of language now rarefied she breaks
by the breath of nostrils who from their own late lair
spew forth the cool of morning or the night externalizing
air.

She bounds from the sight of sound
which flanks like silences the pan of her face---
that she has a face, that she would trade it in despair
for all the wealth and roots of name that she becomes

in order to tramp like silent roots of rain
into the chicory blue of nowhere to echo
nameless's name

but whose roots speak of beasts, speech, whose roots
are the burden of name.

Mantic Core

The curves of your hips seem to torment themselves
as if they wished to be independent even of what
created them. *(C.S.*

my own intentions
tell me
what home is
some kind of beast
heralded as the poverty
of a cycle of patched nexts

(jasper stone in beast's nest, dragon straw,
stray stairs, the optic of clouds)

all the night the beast is busy in my cycle
then I join her
and we day the magic she brings me to imagine

in the night's last longing you
slowly gather
the miscellaneous

In her dream
she kissed the grey faced blacksmith
on the back of his occipital which opened
to mushroom forth a bird with a red mutch on its head.
The bird flew directly to the chimney,
the only remainder of house,
and passed through it from bottom to top
to become smoke which filtered into language.

In her dream the hazel of his eyes
became the mutchkin of bird who flew
from head to hollow of trees,
these, the only reminder of place,
a place from which the cries of this strange bird,
pluie, can be heard.

Pluie, pluie, the beg is in all ways for rain,
the rain to drench thirst, for rain to lift
the curse of not feeding the blacksmith his bread.

In the legend she became
the woman was baking when the smith
begged a bannock to stay his hunger:
she began in earnest to bake the break
but in the end was compelled to cling to all
she had made, and thus the curse was placed
that thereafter she would become as a poor woodpecker
destined always to bark in the hollow of trees
and then disperse her days crying pluie, tipping

her beak and typing the drum-roll whose audible
from thence forward would be taken as sign
for rain, for thunder.

In her dream
the recalcitrant woodpecker
condemned to cry before storms
became a dead son returning in the dead of winter
to revere his mother. He always wore birch
leaves in his hat.
He would enter town on foot carrying with him.
birch fronds and birch wine pressed from the sap.
He would serenade his way from house to house, meandering
where his peripety would take, earning what bread he could
from the attentive, who hung their respective heads
out windows or sat on respective porches or in the trees
where they beckoned him in deliberate tones.

Each fancy he womaned in her bones
not the bread she was quick to give,
but stone. The quarry he mined
became a path, a way land

in her dream.
She borrowed the stone
to make the dead son ask
where exactly is it lodged?

Demonstration of a Need

You place it in my hand, turn it on, tune it,
invite me to be television, I enter sixty percent
of suburban homes thirty eight percent of the day
and night. I deliver the soul from the practice
of problem. I become the issue of endless and mindless
operations of the composition of fields. I dispense
with the scientists. I call all politicans to the
broilers of their imagination. I transcribe the
specialized knowledge of experience into applications
of the principles of measure. I conscience measure.
I adjust.
I mend.
I wash.
I invade.
I breast.
I edge.
I thing.
I dance the morning of measure.
I carry the rain of edge.
I husband the congregation of language.
I hurricane the bright of heart.
I breathe the disservice of quest.
I ought the possible of mouth.
I dayline the light of milk.
I degree the tongue of mind.
I utter the father of bound.
I four square the mother of cavern.
I effort the skin of imagine.
become me.

The Tugboat Captain

So entrance into the river becomes penetration
& so a dagger & carried through
with the resolution of an old tugboat captain
who sleeps in a gold brass bed with credulous ceilings
and speaks articulate French with a lisp though he has it
in his head that color is value and value is tone and tone
a coordination of the soul not so much a room as a river
into and onto which he lowers his boat
to the shores of a great lake in a country to the north
where his daughter who would now be ninety
weaves a hundred inch four shuttle floor loom into coverlets
of old rhythms like Queen Anne's lace and spread
with rose-dapple colored names like the patterns made
by the long thread of ocean into a man.

Primavera

papyrus petals dust
shredded, their bright clothes
shrouds:

there - nowhere else! -
white ruins the brown fringed garland
flung, un-

written, *that* flash! and perilous
our own dying, much
being born. Therefore

she rises, green
foam in which the hills are steeped
and dawn

feathery, your face
as I touched it flown,
nacreous, the doves'

scooped
waves I remember the
first step taken, the dark glow -

daughter
of,
wind's pearl, *Primavera*,

then,
stepped on.

Terra Cotta Figures, Villa Guilia

in memoriam D. H. Lawrence

from dark
chambered rock, wide-
eyed, bulb

through the bulbs'
painted door

what spring
steeved you to light, laid

its brightness
about you

anche il vento even as wind

presses the leaf...

sunk, half
raised from clay, double-

fluted,
paired. as if they breathed

one another.

...on flowered stalks

was

what leapt through
your hand, un-

still, plunging ever, wave-
seeded

bronze,
in your mirrors,

the hills',

wheat

curved
under.

Vigil

After the marriage
ceremony's
ingoing, outgoing,
rowing
of voices, vows -

the village *mairie*
like
some cinereous mushroom
of the heart's
intent,
casts off the lamps'
soft shadows.

Numb,
the dial,
the grooved fingers.

Night,
what drives
the brooding,
incessant voices
of love's passage:

night-rovers
circling, black-
ringed.

Shadows, Firstcomers...

Shadows, firstcomers,
sparked and feathered,
you fall, you
dive, driving the spar
into the lung's nest.

No angel, but a maypole,
from crown to
tip toe, swirling
ablaze. How
can the rootless cones
unlock this glow?

Breath, as it winds. I hear
the coronated
heart pod snap,
black, coruscant,
near.

△

Gerald Burns

A Book of Spells

(lines 661-724)

The *miscellany* of Clactonian tools (but always a
place left, lovingly, for the thumb)
opposes Tayacian flash, the pimp's fedora
in the downtown shop where I used to buy bowlers
coveting the dude-gray one, but best as
broad Homburgs, seen through the back windows of cars.
A wait for gamma globulin, the handsome woman saying
her name like mine, Country walls pale yellow
thinking of an artifical rise on Long Island
by the railroad, testing out Darwin's remark
how many species in a little patch, of grass there are.
Told I've high blood pressure, the heart dissolving in salt
like fish put in the wrong tank. The shark
or whale (it was) at Coney Island, sick or unhappy
blimped about, the corridor lit by what came
though deep water and then glass, white.
A place for assignation. The electric eel a
finned organ. The San Antonio zoo
had a little bird the color of orange sherbet.
A small cap may be, to protect the hair
from hydrolized fats carrying stearates

orange up the temples and higher forehead
eyes and eyebrows white, powdered, denser white again
deep red in semicircles just above the beard
then pink for cheeks and flesh over orange, to blend.
Powder, outline eyes in black with a dot
above & below and accent the beard.
Apply the false nose. Settle the derby.
That wasn't interesting; that was just pain
ultrasound plotting the bile duct
back at cage doors for the 8 o'clock show
Barton rejecting the constant first-person
at breakfast, the Hotel Clarke in Hastings
the duct, says the doctor, passing ill
(Kent Clayton in white, magnificent
and Philips juggles soft felt period hats.)
Through my open door the pattern water and wind makes
above it, flat, on the ceiling as the water (inverted) on lawn
the wind making more of a natural thing of my house than usual.
We dry, with I think one rust-colored stain
on my cement stoop a slug, numbed, printed
into the stone, maybe by sun's violence. Once
by the Pacific a butterscotch one, with bubbly trail.
David Jones' scrut reminds me ineluctably
of Sherston's "scroop" for a chair being pushed back
both, maybe all, the World War I people
conscious of rodents, the too-dry paws and whiskers
as, passing a concrete gully the small rat or large
mouse, on an anthill, then a delicate
pillow of its own underfur, skull, tail.
Lights go down, alter, with the front house activities
perhaps vacuuming; I imagine the radio in the bath
or machine sewing leather chewed by the young women.
The odor from the front air conditioner, strong when
I come to get my mail: tortillas deep fat

a year since the neighbors would throw a cow's head
over the fence, just bone, for our dogs.
Menudo in pots, then, served in a language I don't understand
to relatives, people in what Olson would think of as a polis
Medrano a word on an old grocery sign, and a politician.
The family romance: Gosse's father wrote a book
on elementary microscopy—best on
the aquarium snail's coiled endless rasp tongue. A
recording of the sound that would make, a cassette.

José Lezama Lima

Ten Prose Poems

translated from the Spanish by James E. Irby

Joyful Night

The hut by the sea shore has kept for one night the naked body of the solitary fisherman. Sleep has been restless, but that unabandoned reality of the lynx-eyed paintbrush accompanies him like a cloak of dew. His turnings on the accompanying quilt were due to the bright stages of moving fire, which even in sleep assured the supreme dignity of movement. When his eyes flashed, his body was already rising from the bed: a good way to answer the ray of light with a movement of the body. Now his body is amid the waves and the sinister lantern of the enemy shore undulates like the whims of the enemy beast. In successive conversations with the sleeping fish his body advances, laughing at its reflections. An arm, a leg, but always the body as a pursued sign ends in a perpetual dignity. How could the body in emerging from sleep and the hut already be prepared for the trembling definition of the current? When he arrives the earth is still silent and nocturnal, but the pilgrim touches it with his forehead and his pursued sign, and in a rhythmical curve his body now prepares to pursue the lantern of the shore left behind. The silence of his body accompanied by the song of the fish, by the curled-up blood of the coral accordians and by the trees of fireflies that come down to the shore to touch the body of the solitary fisherman. And the trees seem to greet both a man and the friendly fragrance of the dye bark. He has penetrated again the hut on the shore, but now he has found

it all illuminated. His body transfused in a light sent from elsewhere seems to show forth in a Participation, and the Lord, just and benevolent, smiles an exquisite smile. But the fisherman does not interrupt his joy in the Presence, spurts out a curved stream of water, reminiscence of love for the enemy shore and the benevolent hut, and says to us, *What has passed through here?*

Fabulous Censures

Quickly, the water is reabsorbed nervously into the corpuscle; slow it is, like the invisible splashing of lead. The crevices, the dry protuberances are pulled to the same level by the whale-like passage of the water. It covers Tartaruses, Barathrums and Depths, and does not sleep in its extension because of the hum. Who hears? Who pursues? The very rock, previously a freezing, cooks in the straight decisive swift corpuscle sent by the light the new bodies of the dance. The receptacle creaks sluggishly, and the shark—slow breadth of silver in the accelerated breadth of lead—gradually shows his smile, his leisurely and total frenzy. A shred of veined copper stays over his tail, a laughing dolphin hovers on the dorsal fin. The slow column of impelled horizontal lead has fulfilled its role of closing off the deformities and nobilities, the gentle silver and the corrugated iron. The smoke of secreted evaporation has gesticulated in the rocky casserole, which thus afflicts the stone with the very brief touch of a thread torn loose from Energy. The shark that has been able to breathe in the column of lead, matching the stream he has breathed with the color of his skin, in all later years has continued in the water with the muscular jubilance of a star outside the window. The breeze was a guide: testimony of each pore used by the opal, the scorpion and the hoopoe. The body of the shark forced the chorus of rocks surrounding his neck, while the light like an oxyhydrogen torch painted animals and flowers on his venerable face. Applying himself then to the in-

nermost part of the rocks, he provoked the dynasty and destiny of the roots spreading out in galleries where the perverse flow of lunar liquid had circulated. The rock is the Father, the light is the Son. The breeze is the Holy Spirit.

The Adhering Substance

If we left our arms in the ocean for two years the toughness of our skin would be strengthened until it bordered on the greatest and noblest of animals and on the monster that comes at the call of soup and bread. Crude latherings with the tegument of a horse. Chew a crab and breathe it out through our fingertips while playing the piano. Qualities that come and are repulsed with slowness, with displeasure and propriety. With celestial disgust. With celestial scorn for frivolity and the errant, wayward stamp, the submerged arm dignifies its cramps and its absent whiteness; it endures the sleep of the tides first, and the miserable jewels that drill through its flesh until they are blessed by a rosy doubling dew, perhaps to make with them a region of sands like eyes, where the hollow pincer, the shameful foot are transported with the natural swiftness of air thickened by hard and silver light. The submerged arm, as it is turned into a lodging for centerings and bubbles, intractable hump for resolute informers, finds itself circled by the insect like a flying point; while the snail like an insistent point, frantic yet very very slow, becomes encrusted on that portion, flesh and earth, pounded with masterly craft by the renewed numbers of the waves. Thus that submerged fragment, secured by the trial period of peace, is returned by echo and reflux as a superhuman, very very white mystery. As the years go by, the submerged arm does not become a marine tree; on the contrary it returns a larger statue, with an improbable yet palpable body, a similar body for that submerged arm. Very very slow, as from life to sleep; as from sleep to life, very very white.

Fifes, Epiphany, Goats

Clarities became dark. Until then darkness had been a diabolic sloth, and clarity a contented insufficiency of the creature. Unchanged dogmas, clear darknesses which the blood in spurts and in continuity resolved, like the butterfly caressing the shepherd's forehead while he sleeps. A birth that was before and after, before and after the abysses, as if the birth of the Virgin were prior to the appearance of the abysses. *Nondum eram abyssi et ego jam concepta eram.* The delectable mystery of the sources that will never be resolved. The rejected uncooked clay now cooked, already leaping outside origins for grace and wisdom. The Book of Life that begins with a metaphor and ends with the vision of Glory is all filled with You. And Yours is the tremendous punishment, the sudden decapitation: You can erase from the Book of Life. Eternal Life, which arches from man clarified by Grace to the nocturnal tree, can declare mortal, strike down, release the spark. Once the erasure is made, a new name comprising a new man occupies its place, which thus does not even leave behind the shadow of its hollowness, the scandal of its ashes. Tremendous drought now erased by the goats of familiar contentment, by the pipes of overturnings and colors. Herd together, stumble, understand yourselves, more deeply if one is disposed to be born, to march toward the youthfulness that is becoming eternal. Until the arrival of Christ, Pascal said, only *false peace* had existed; after Christ, we may add, true warfare has existed. The warfare of partisans, of witnesses killed in battle, the hundred and forty and four thousand, offered as firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb (*Revelation*, 14:3 and 4): And they sung as it were a new song before the throne. Herd together, stumble, goats; begin at last, pipes, God and man are now alone. Tremendous drought, blaze of sun: I go toward my forgiveness.

Weight of Flavor

Seated within my mouth I attend the landscape. The great white tuba establishes non-spiraloid mumblings, bridges and linkages. In that tuba, the paper and the large drop of lead fall slowly but without causality. Although if we withdraw the mat of our tongue and suddenly confront the palatine vault, the paper and the drop of lead could not stand the terror. Then, the paper and the drop of lead downward are like the tortoise upward but without ascending. If we were to withdraw the mat . . . Thus the flavor that tends to stand out, if we were to tear out its tongue, would multiply in perennial arrivals, as if our door were continually attended by bulldogs, Chinese beggars, angels (the order of angels called Thrones, that rapidly place things in God) and long-tailed crustaceans. When the mat is sliced, turning the emptiness into an inquisitive though eyeless fish, the vocal cords receive the flow of dark dampness, beginning the monody. A dark lurch and the echo of the vocal cords, the night thus pursuing the night, the waning cat's back pursuing the dragonfly, obtaining the necessary amount of whiteness so that the messenger can go through the wall. The sheet of paper and the drop of lead go toward the luminous circle of the abdomen that extends its fires to receive the visitor and keep away the speckled agony of the pitiful tiger. The weightiness of the palatine vault grinds up even the breath, deciding that the luminous ray must advance amid the colloidal states formed by the revolutions of the solids and the liquids in their first inaugural fascination, when the beginnings revolve, as yet unable to detach the ages. Later, the successions will always maintain a nostalgia for the limited single specimen, the white peacock or the buffalo that hates mud, but with nearness forever attained and accessible, as if we could only walk on the mat. Seated within my mouth I notice death moving like the motionless fir submerging its icy glove in the trash of the pond. An inverse custom had made for me the opposite marvel, in dreams during afternoon naps I thought it a consummate obligation—seated now in my mouth I contemplate the

darkness surrounding the fir—for the scribe to wake up day after day as a palm tree.

Death of Time

In a vacuum velocity dares not compare itself, can caress the infinite. Thus the vacuum is defined and inert as a world of non-resistance. Also the vacuum sends out its first negative graph so it can be like non-air. The air we were accustomed to feel (to see?): soft as a sheet of glass, hard as a wall or a sheet of steel. We know by an almost invisible stirring of the non-existence of an absolute vacuum that there cannot be an infinite unconnected to divisible substance. Thanks to that we can live and are perhaps fortunate. But let us suppose some implausibilities in order to gain some delights. Let us suppose the army, the silk cord, the express train, the bridge, the rails, the air that constitutes itself as another face as soon as we draw close to the window. Gravity is not the tortoise kissing the ground. The express train always has to be stopped on a bridge with a broad rock base. It impels itself—like the impulsion of his smile to laughter, to raucous laughter, in a feudal lord after his garnished dinner—, until it decapitates tenderly, until it dispenses with the rails, and by an excess of its own impulsion slips along the silk cord. That velocity of infinite progression tolerated by a silk cord of infinite resistance comes to feed upon its tangencies that touch the ground with one foot, or the small box of compressed air between its feet and the back of the ground (lightness, angelisms, nougat, larks). The army in repose has to rest upon a bridge with a broad rock base, impels itself and comes to fit, in hiding, behind a small poplar, then in a worm with a backbone grooved by an electric time. The velocity of progression reduces the tangencies, if we suppose it to be infinite, the tangency is pulverized: the reality of the steel box on the archetypal rail, in other words the silk cord, is suddenly stopped, the constant progression

derives another independent surprise from that temporal tangency, the air turns as hard as steel, and the express train cannot advance because the potency and the resistance become infinite. There is no fall because of the very intensity of the fall. While potency turns into ceaseless impulsion, the air mineralizes and the moving box—successive, impelled—, the silk cord and the air like steel refuse to be replaced by the crane on one foot. Better than substitution, restitution. To whom?

Procession

The parade of the numbers took place in the tedium of its invincible fall, a malaise tolerated as proof of its comfortable succession. Within the numbers there were successions and meanings: if the successions motivated their friendly groupings, the meanings motivated the challenging fluidity of their rhythms. The parades of the binary of war, the elusive sequence of the fish, forgot their origins and their ends, their impulsion and their extenuated frenzy, in order to give us in the muscles of the leopard the finest geometrical progressions, in navigating magnets a ridiculous and unforgettable limitation. The fascinations of those archetypal groupings, of the magnetizing that convokes in order to flee from the whirl that must be reduced to the law of its structure, gradually brought about the end of the cynic, the atomist and the pre-Augustinian Alexandrine. *The vendor of words.* Man propagates and injures his substance, God superabounds, the encounter takes place in His generosities. But the beginning, at false and visible moments, seemed to be separated from the Other. From then on, men will form two groups: those who believe that the generosity of the One engenders sameness, and those who believe that it leads it to Darkness, to the Other. Thus the procession which in emerging from Form is prolonged until it passes through and is submerged by ultimate Essence, is saved yet again by being filled

with the symbolic and concupiscible figure that encloses the already illuminated substance. And thus where the Stoic thought that he lept out of his skin into a void, the Catholic situates the procession in order to awake in his body as a limit, the adventure of the same real and richly possible substance in order to awake in Him. When he dies, the Procession has become so inordinate that the plasticity of the chorale is replaced by an echo that seems to turn back again toward us, already extending hands, walking another cross. In the snow, in the defile, in the chosen mansion, the procession of men goes on dividing by similarity, occupying, betraying or communicating the same body, the blood and the oils.

Tangencies

After inventing the zero, Prince Aleph-Zero proceeded on horseback until sleep was put across his path, throwing him from his horse toward the grass that covered soft spongiform rocks. The horse's arrow is his nose. He placed his knife between the ground and himself, and then placed his shield over the knife with malicious inclination, since through there his sleep was going to pass. As the knife moved over the ground, the fountain gushed forth, but the seed was dying. In the first disasters of sleep, he had leaned with his somnolent bow on the vertical thrust of the recent fountain, in such a way that the bow resting on what he could glimpse was hardened horizontally; increasing its potency the jet of the fountain touched both the man detached from the air and his sleep so lightly that he could keep himself horizontal without giving up the sleep that had detached him from his horse. Sleep amputated him from his horse, making him feel that as he abandoned it he abandoned himself, so that then he could regain the impenetrable hardness of the same sleep crossed upon the clock within the fountain. Again the horse throws its hyaline crewman through sleep. The horse that savors arsenic rejects tortoise

shell powder. The cargo thrown by the horse into the fountain keeps his forehead softly resting on the edge of the window. He is not the inventor of the zero, he is the inventor of the sling and seed, the one who waits until the water rots so that the planetary memory of the seed may begin. The marvelous man, on the contrary, at the corner of his garden of triangular and lozenge-shaped flagstones, squats on his legs and stretches out his arms like a swan fed with diorite cotton. Even at night, a tribune gymnast, losing his memory, a retrospective acidity with a patina, hemmed in by his rhythmic, copious, trembling scratches. At midnight, the man of the seed with his face cut drops his head softly on the edge of the window, which also supports the two feet of the man in the green, orange and grey tights of steel mesh, taking the corner of his garden like a rope in a port. Each separated by the edge of the window, the man of earth arches his eye more to listen than to discover, while the gymnast, in the same midnight of startled normality, raises and lowers his legs in a rhythm that seems like the memory of a march along the river. When he deposited the seed, he could not know that it was pierced through, support for a night when thrown from the horse. The gymnast, abruptly shifting the tiny rubber ball with a steel center from his hand of remembered smoke to his other hand of bitten gold, opens his eyes and linearity in his weariness, exhausting himself to attain the height, duration and weight of a saurian. It is not strange that whenever he finally throws the instruments with which he strengthened the steadiness of his hands, he should stumble upon a flower because of his fatigue, and that each monstrous fatigue should be paralyzed with the earthborn attached burning sensation of the seed pierced through by the man thrown from the horse.

Ecstasy of the Destroyed Substances

And you, Promachus, close the double chain of ants. Did you

count the cattle? Destroy the body and the sign of its hollowness so as to attain the reminiscence of its transparency. Destroy the inverse relationship of unity and substance, of number and perceptible thing, resolved in the figure detached by the extasy of participation in the homogeneous. But first, the sphere is encompassed by the boy's hand. The violent substitution followed by a hollow gust prepares the void, the whale and the bottle, where there is coming and going as by a principal originator, covered with smoke and extremely hurried. Now, blind am I. I encompass and understand myself, blackened in the bottle that contains the dead armillary sphere suspended by boreal magnets. Blind am I, my home is the whale. Alongside the void, I emit my yawn or give away plaster hats, and an immense funerary ceramic takes from the temple those who have been decapitated in order to establish with their simultaneous fury a dense hum of memories. Thus, in a marshy grotto, with a waltzed floor squeezed from tortoise eggs, the master watchmaker trembles at the frightful coincidences and the fleur-de-lys covered farmer receives, as he sows the only false document, the shameless blessings of the law. The substitution of metaphor and act, pulverizing the thing in itself, illuminating it like a stained glass window distributing the light of day. the ecstasy of what is beautiful in itself breathes a participating breath into the thing in itself, because of the transparency of man and the reading of the rocks. Linear development of instant, erotics, being (unity), existing (act), metaphor (substitution of being), participation (substitution of existing), Paradise (extasy of participation in the homogeneous, intemporality). Linearity broken or swollen by the three circular moments of germ, entity, eternity, necessary for taking over their refuge, leaving at the door Doctor Faust's flaming dog. The destruction of substance, illuminating its variants or metamorphoses, because of the dryness of its suspension or withdrawals. The Son of Man destroyed, transformed into the lasting substance of the body of God, because all transfigurations are followed by a suspension and the exercise on the Mount of Skulls was only an apprenticeship for being plunged into a violent and

superhuman negative capacity. Frantic self-destruction which makes all metamorphosis ridiculous, in order to reach the constant germ within the entity. The power of the scorpion—*Revelation* 9:5—, which does not attack any green thing but instead attacks only the men who have no seal on their foreheads. The power of the scorpion in alliance with the *splendor formae*. Natural substance does not change. The rational soul receives the intelligible light by means of the illuminated figure or plenitude. When the witness exclaims: *only thus does a god die*, he has been broken and has fallen in battle against the mute or incessant waking spirit.

Resistance

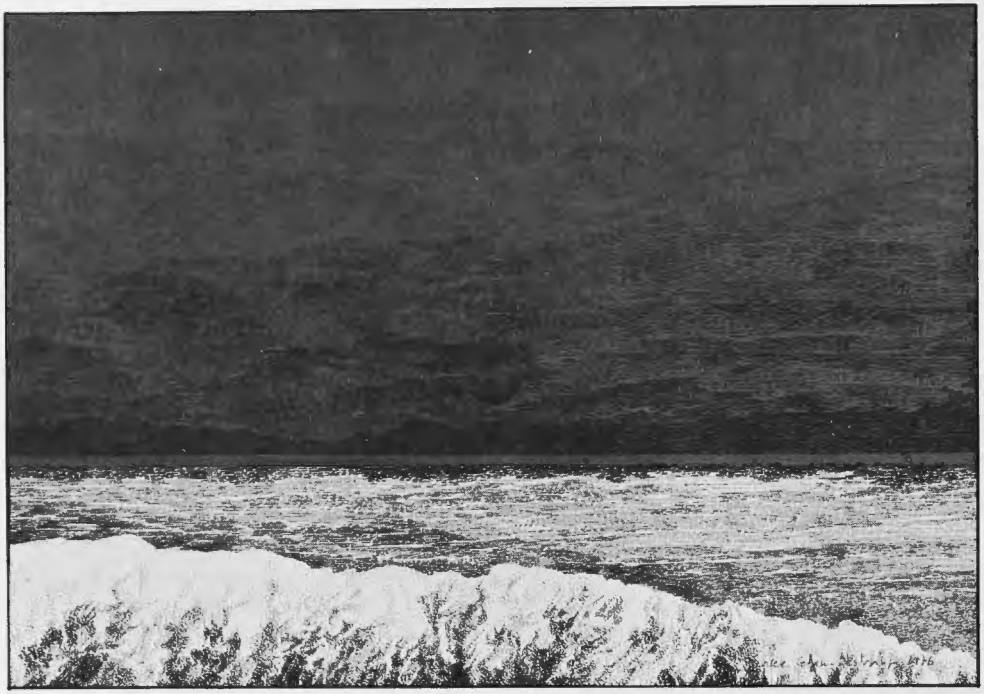
Resistance always has to destroy the act and the potency which demand the antithesis of the corresponding dimension. In the world of *poiesis*, opposed in so many things to the world of physics, which is the world we have had since the Renaissance, resistance has to proceed by rapid inundations, by total trials that do not want to adjust, clean or define the crystal, but rather to surround, to open a breach through which water may fall tangent to the turning wheel. Potency is, like hail, everywhere, but resistance recovers itself in the danger of not being in the earth or in hail. The demon of resistance is nowhere, and therefore it presses like the mortar and the broth, and keeps leaving its mark like the fire in the golden glitter of visions. Resistance assures that all the wheels are turning, that the eye sees us, that potency is a delegated power dropped upon us, that it is the non-self, things, coinciding with the darkest self, with the stones left in our waters. Hence the eyes of potency do not count, and in resistance what crosses our path, springing either from ourselves or from a mirror, is reorganized into eyes with currents passing through them that perhaps may never belong to us at all. Compared with resistance, morphology is completely ridiculous. What morphology allows, the

realization of an epoch in a style, is very scant in comparison to the eternal resistance of what is not permissible. Potency is merely the permission granted. Method: not even intuition, not even what Duns Scotus called confused abstract knowledge, reason in disarray. Method: not even creative vision, since total resistance prevents the organizations of the subject. When resistance has overcome the quantitative, the ancestral recollections of the steward and the last sterile figurations of the qualitative, then the man they have repented making begins to boil, the man made and set loose, but with a daily repentence for having made him by the one who made him. Then . . . *On this night, at the beginning of it, they saw fall from the sky a marvelous branch of fire into the sea, at a distance from them of four or five leagues* (Journal of Voyage, 15 September 1492). Let us not fall into the sea of paradise regained, for the men who came packed into a ship moving within a resistance could see a branch of fire fall into the sea because they felt the history of many in a single vision. Those are the times of salvation and their sign is a fiery resistance.

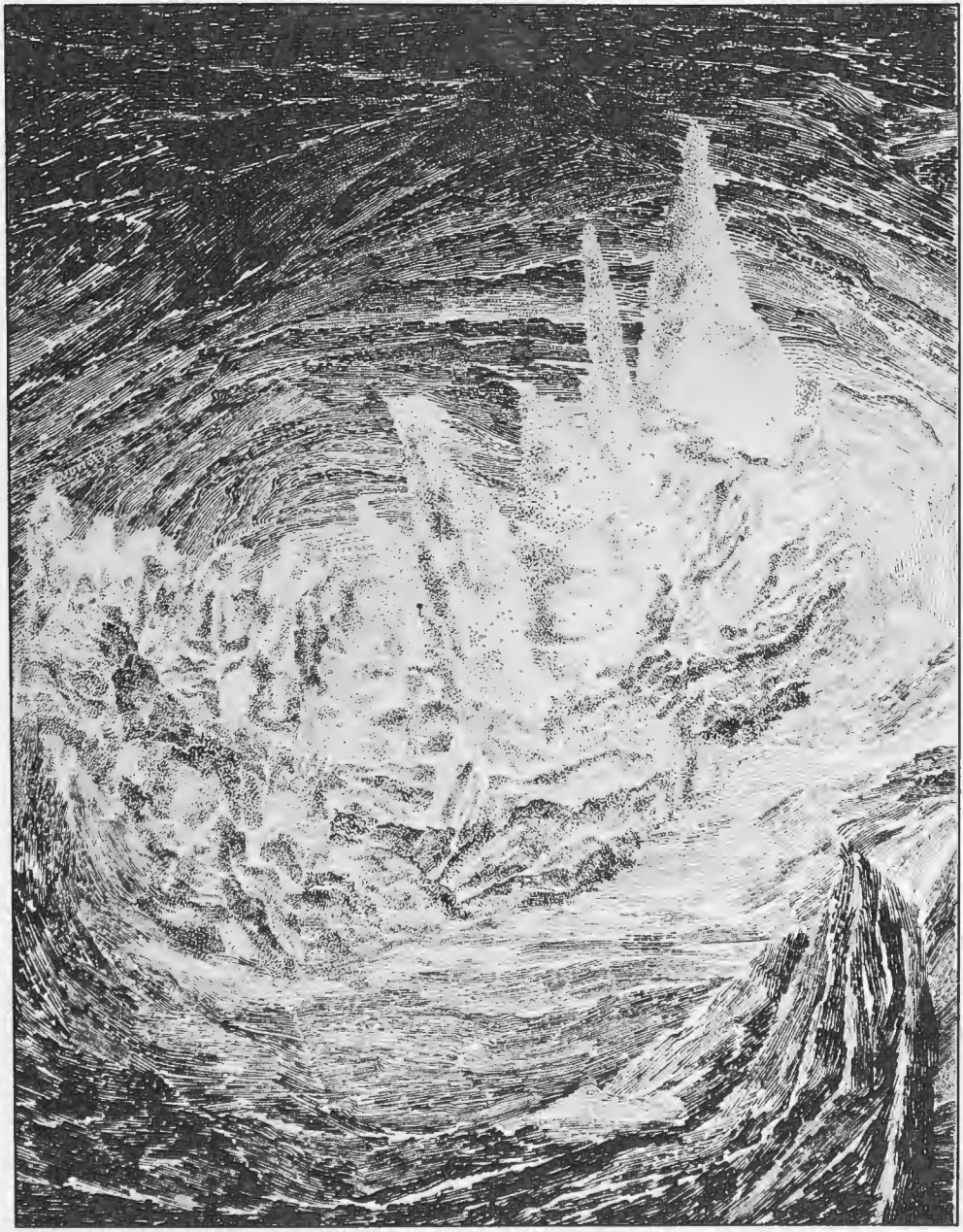
△

The Cuban poet José Lezama Lima (1910-1976) is unique in Hispanic writing for his genial hermeticism, his dense hyperbolic expansiveness. He is known in English mainly for his novel *Paradiso*, translated in 1974. His many poems and essays, however, remain all but unknown. He first published the following pieces in his magazine *Nadie Parecía* one in each of its ten issues, in the same order as given here, between September 1942 and March 1944. (The location, of course, was Havana, where he spent all his life.) He never called them "prose poems" or gave them any overall title, but he twice reprinted them as the sequence comprising the second section of his book *La fijeza* (1949), all of whose other pieces except two, are poems in verse. It was in these prose texts that Lezama first began to expound as well as enact a poetics, or what he was later to call, after further essays in that direction, "a poetic system of the world." One of their many remarkable features is their insistence on progressions that have a powerfully scattered, multidirectional thrust, "like the simultaneous translation of several unknown languages," as Lezama once said about Góngora's *Soledades*. Another feature is the way this refractory quality or "resistance" in poetry adumbrates for Lezama the power of resurrection, seen as the supreme denial of logic or natural causality in his peculiar variety of Catholic eschatology. These translations try to render literally the strangeness of Lezama's texture, so unconcerned with euphony or elegance. —*J.E.I.*

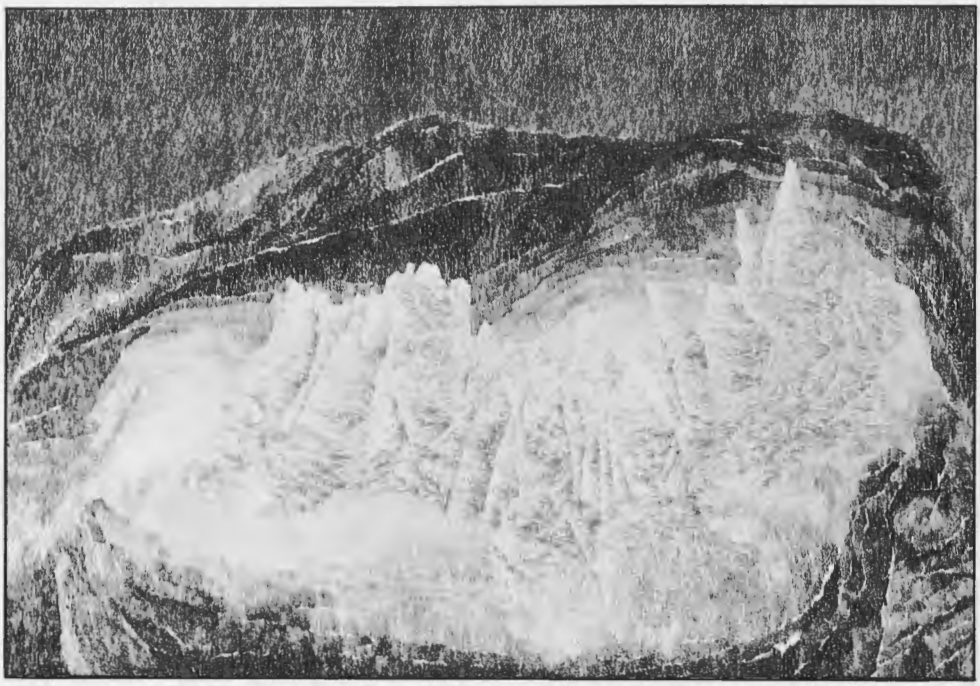
GISELE CELAN-LESTRANGE



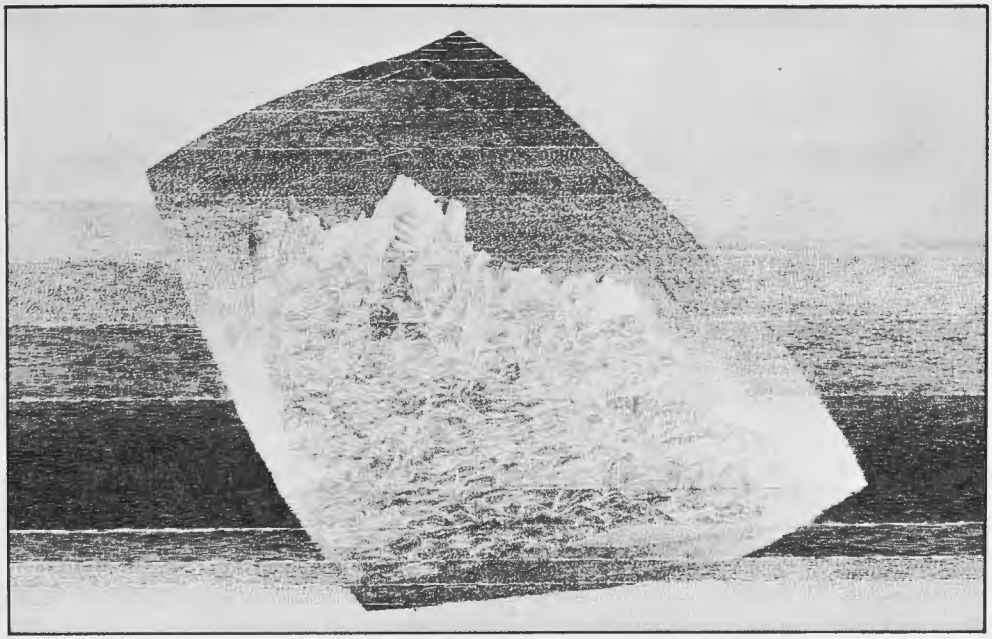
Le gris ét la côte, 1976 ink drawing on white and grey papers



Hommage á Erich Arendt, bistre ink drawing



Terre ébranlée, 1976 colored ink drawing



Chemins de mémoire, 1976 colored ink drawing

Giséle Celan-Lastrange (the widow of the poet Paul Celan) lives and works in Paris.

David Rattray

A red-framed print of the Summer Palace

My mother died in her bed
one balmy night in May 1974;
my hair wasn't yet gray.
At the head of the bed
was a red-framed print
of the Summer Palace near Peking
in salmon pink and tea green
over a lake with a little steam launch
and a bridge
to an island in the foreground.
She'd been there as a girl
and for 50 years after
dreamt of it
only to awake
in tears at not returning
to the summer palace of youth.
In her will she left me the picture—
it's on my study wall.
Last year
a Sinologist came by, and I learned
the bridge
in incorrectly rendered.
There are in fact
17 arches, not 14 as shown.
Also, there are errors in perspective
and the Chinese writing in the clouds
over the lake
is cut and dried description,
not the poetry I'd hoped.

Pythagorean Silence

we that were wood
when that a wide wood was
In a physical Universe playing with
words
Bark be my limbs my hair be leaf
Bride be my bow my lyre my quiver

Intellect idea and (Real) being

Perpetual swipe of glaciers dividing

pearl (empyrean ocean)
Text of traces crossing orient

and occident Penelope
who is the image of philosophy

(your wisdom hidden in a mystery)
what ships I have seen

Sails filling or falling
horizons wandering real world

and yet a dream world
(immediacy) hold fast to this

Gradations of light die into distance

loose themselves in light Darkness

Shapes shadow-hunting
Supremacy

(now a cast shadow)
Height of that tower diminished to

this letter
Light narrowed to this point or line

Forfeit feeds nativity

Ruin into rout
antiquity - Runes

a row of signs
ordering sound

(sacred and secret tree systems)
I sleep

or half sleep Selflessness
and skylark swallowed up

Mountains and summer move Snow
includes them

green syllables of scenery in spring

One generation falling asleep

another waking up Memory
harmony multiplicity

sheen of sacramental mystery

intellection of fate and fame
unfathomable visionary dream

Knowledge is simple recollection

Recollection returns

forgotten Boundless

time inattention
Finite velocity

it has happened it is history
Tracing

the change in ideas about change

Drafts

of furiously scribbled pages Scraps
of beginnings

and the problem of lost Originals
Approach to the Castle of Perilous

knight tested by the illusion

of nothingness Estray
into my own Exile

(a dome to hive) Majestical
Soul is a god and sun is a God

on the horizon (Principle
vision) out of an ocean

Soul is the maker of sun She
is dressed as a man

Beholder in silence and in utter

forgetfulness

Dream of wandering in woods with

my father
Leaves are white his dress

is white

(considered as white)

cut as if carved in marble Pure
outline of form

fading from color and from frame

We look into distance as a dream
what we are

and we are not Threading mazes

of unwearied thought

Long long years
grain sprouting from body wheat

and barley

A border-rider's kingdom
(holy horse not to be ridden

holy places not be trodden)Wheel

of Destiny
Plato's spindle of necessity

pantheon of history shivered into

ruin
Walking about at a gate with keys

Singing the keys

Looking west with a low sun
Mystical gaiety

irrational dimensions of an infinite city

Perspectives enter

and disappear
The perpetual dead embark Hoop

of horizon
negation pursuit and illusion

fourscore and fade

a moving doom of brood
(ideas gems games dodges

scaffolding)

Long pythagorean lustrum

nothing new can come into being
Change

and juxtaposition
(heavenly systems move monotonous

motion)
Green grows the morning

in a first college of Something
austere music

ideal republic
Language ripples our lips

Sparrows peck at the gravel
(caged words

setting them free)
Sing the golden verses of Pythagoras

(were they ever really written)
Sweet notes

deaf sea
Outside at the back of the sky

biography blows away

To trip a careless runner's crown

War

approaches its abstract form Play
of possibilities

probabilities

(mechanical necessitarianism)

good and bad luck
Voracious coinage at the confines

political acres of prey and chirrup
Confusion

of lines bisecting shred
after shred of feeling

Cleared up cold this morning
Foraging

and straggling
To see through all things clearly

is to see through all things dimly
Marches

and maneuvers
Incessantly advancing towards the aim of

standing still

- You are asleep Penelope
says a shadowy figure from

the Odyssey
A dream soul from Barbarous

We are alone
and we are alone Nomads

and a loving family

where nobody nobody nobody

no matter at all

Light has made the circuit of
the Universe

Leaves shiver shrinking back
to dark

The measure of force
(as magnitude) as fixed

in flux
Absolute magnitudes

regions untenanted by stars

Hearer and the half-articulate
nearer and nearer

the secret Secret

Clay has fallen on my monologue
Clay on my coat

cold clay on my coat

Measure a million million
measure a million to margin

Steadfast into this sliding

no sequence seen

Thales
supposed the earth to float on

water
Infinite matter

(Anaximander)

Ocellus of Luciana and his work on

the Universe

(Entelechy)
actuality of the body Texts

torn from their context

Forms
back into names

Newton's sailor paces three miles
an hour

while the ship sails west

Doomsday overturns and milleniums

riddance and rest

Blind wisdom wanders along
(arrows for thought)

left side of the world
Sleeps very little

We hear her walking in her room
moving through measured

velocity
Passing away according to restless

necessity

Irascible unknowable disorderly
irrational

Poverty my mother and Possession

my father
Time to set our face homeward

Shadow-emperor

Michel Deguy

—translated from the French
by Clayton Eshleman

I CALL *muse* the seesaw of the sky, the wind transporter at *his* volition of our views, this wash drawing when I open with the cat my eyes a slit, the one who caressed the cat; *muse*, the profusion that works range in uncompletable concerto sequences, in reiterated poems, in Indian file, flattened, and classed piled up on canvases, on stones, on wood, on music paper, in Linnaeus' octavos, Aristotle's glass cases, files

I call *muse* the pain that they cause me, the moon sun jugglery, *muse* the voyage to the south of the earth where frozen lakes are bordered by flamingos pink as the painted nails on the fan of twilight, the moon and its cortege of pools when nupially it crosses the bridge of earth similar to Chile from one end to the other, *muse* the cranes the black bull an owl passed the swans, the most southern town where I was which called itself *Porvenir*, the pubis bird, the rotted sea house under the gulls' dextrogyre cross, *muse* the voyage, Tierra del Fuego like a cloud at the end of *Punta-Arenas* Street, the sea's royal hand, the plane like an elegant eye, the patience of Noah necessary to greet the day long curtsy of the Magellan Sea, the cloud with which the sky veiled its love and the portico of color through which it passed, on return the Patagonian shore like a cock

Muse the moral voyage where dreams are daydreams and courage arches from one's back, poetic exactitude of the earth crossing one's

mind, the Pampa night disclosing the distance, womanless table at which each knows how much it costs to speak, this landing of calm at a certain depth in the torment, the patience of colors that help us make our choice, humus table-cloth put away each morning, the vale one must clamber down

clam burr down

the phlegmatic homonymy in the language that is gioconda like the famous effigy, the hospitable paranomasia similar to the jig-saw puzzle abandoned by the children, the acceptance where everything reposes in genitive ambiguity, the always original erosion which draws Spanish and Portuguese out of Latin

Muse the tender brain where everything escapes, the plaquette conceded to the placater, the audacity to which grammar lends itself, *muse* my confidence in not-willing thinking, the migratory responses, the equality which falls like snow on the "slightest events," that everything is true including "the deceitful tenderness in the farewell."

Muse that the climbing be climbing in the body and the descent descend in the body, *muse* yet again the strangeness of the soul and its conditions, the poems that we read at the dentist's, tapping a foot to cover the blood, at the display of chance the poems that resist the leafing pulse; *muse* the meal that is always *served there* in the tale of *Beauty and the Beast* where we live, for "he went down into the garden and found the meal prepared,"

I call *muse* Venice, the porches Negroes in ribbons, Venice of the gondolaed nails, where the stranger turns around like one arriving in Venice, the plaza led to the visible like a square of players, the things that look at each other for the visible is a human concern

Muse the equal fullness of all places, that rich frieze of the narrows equal to our narrow eyes, the spacious liberty of free space, that every parvis, every esplanade, every terrace, every stoop "clears" so as to show this discrete multiplicity that allows us to enter and to leave, to go away, to approach, "I don't want to disturb you," *muse* this void

Muse the history of the muses, the chronic testimonies, every birth a fairy a bedside located under the nine gifts of irrefutable provincial

godmothers, history now this collage of *news*, and the inclined plane of inventions, the utterly surprising arrival of Philoctetes or of Joyce, the unforeseeable gesture of Achilles or of Tintoretto

Ting tint
Array Auray tent foray stentor Aretin Perroquet Tyndareus Paindoré Tintoretto

the excessive promise of names, the anonymity of still hidden species which wait their turn to rise to the clearing of men

I claim this tardy wedding that must be waked, this festival absence whose fire below supports our virgin lamps, *muse* therefore its advent with guinea fowl gilded grey jerks

The delicate grafts of memory in the night, the legend of a word, *muse* likewise the enemy, the hate that crumples the interview, this handful of fake bones and grimaces, this solid alloy of derm and humour that pursues, far from me, the relationship between densities, the indifference to my death, the delay on the part of men to transform their element into a law, the coldness of happiness to knowledge, all the configurations of gaps, of props, of breaks in the involuntary edifice of the stay, the petrified shoulder of the hand that writes *mane thecel pharès*

To Forget the Image

I have looked at you as Christ, imagine, Veronica and they separated each with the scalped face of the other
Their *thou* does not date from this conventional poem

Moored to this beauty so close to you, the shop-sign of hair banging around as if in a street of birth, my eyes tumified

The bandage of nights will drain me, I will scatter your ashes, will shoo away your curves, your figure of an inverted "muse" in this young sun-tanned woman who sought poetry among the very men who usurp it, your age of an inverse ignorant muse reincarnated older in every age
the torn wrappings of night heal me, your face dies away, your teeth bridle me less each morning since this morning

And what were we talking about with the others, everyone pretending that beauty was self-evident, like your skin looking very beautiful (like a piece of work) goes about itself among this pretensive we

(Frost on the polished bone structure, your
dark forehead,
The blue head-band of eyes at mid-face,
Sloping temples and incunabular walls over
The patent mouth and the immortal teeth,
Trapezoids toward the breasts perhaps, and the

drawn back sex)

Tomorrow evening the muteness of our stage-whisper will die out, I no longer wear the earlocks of Cathar murmur

...and of what were we speaking pretending not to fix our eyes on beauty like an oblique species that our mimed distraction would not bother, or because there no longer is any beauty, or because beauty has to learn equal footing, but allowing stealth to take care of gathering beauty to your side

allowing your face to pass behind your collar, your face to continue behind a little bit of wool everywhere invisible, a millimeter of linen forbids your skin which goes up wrists and tibias again to rejoin slopes under the wool, to stick to you

And the troubled men who mechanically invited you, whom your oblique presentation or yourself without makeup like a piece of bark enamoured, mayor or president, were speaking to not say that you were holding a meeting more open than one of theirs

In spite of your body like Casanova you wanted to know, to learn, to change, but your hair that a gravity in your service spread without respite like a spring across its stone, betrayed you, and the unprotected imagination caught the plague of your endemic face

The tampon of night, I know, will drain the eyes injected with you, at last I will try to remind myself that you were without ever having been blue companion from station to station

The strange law to not love, that timidity hides with its likeness, will relax its contraint, and the eclipse, total through your image, will eclipse in a poem

the hard law to not love leaves our vassalage, migrates in the neighboring compartment, forgets itself in a poem

"I search for my words"

Michel Deguy, editor of the magazine *Po&Sie*, has published a dozen collections of poetry and essays over the past two decades. He lives in Paris. The poems presented here are from *Quadratures,* a selected poetry of Deguy, to be published by the University of California Press.

△

Larry Eigner

October 28-29 80

a late hour
walking
past the opposite houses
as I get to bed
in the front room

not much
blue jeans

days
faster and faster
so the nights as well

bushes

wind

enough
earth circles
fairly perfect

leaves on the stream

tree branches

dog at a halt

tail balanced stop

Fire Dept.
Ambulance wait

widely spaced
buildings

how heedless
do you have to be

is that
an office
sounding like that

kids ah
what kinds of bird

propped up
comes out

through the red fence
wood gate open

hook and ladder was
hidden and
pulling away

now

after the van

how much to realize

so how is there meaning

to all the time in the world

car stuck
horn
fine
hour gone fast
keeping things up with
scenes from every place
one big sport is enough
countless horizons green
because of hills, trees,
the wind has a slowness
as it seems not too often
it's a temperate zone
and again I saw the west
or wailing wall
pulling a switch sleep
all these sold VWs
you can't really track years

hours by the window
the cat awake
two windows
cornering the sun
bulk
how far past earth
back of the house
to go
stretch upward times
small
moving fast
jaws

how that's happened

no words

Δ

Leonardo Sciascia

The Crowley Case: Aprocrypha

Translated from the Italian by Bradford Morrow

TO THE POLICE COMMISSIONER

Investigate and report the activities of Edward Alexander Crowley, British citizen, living in Cefalú.

M.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY BENITO MUSSOLINI
HEAD OF STATE

Rome, 15 July 1924

In reference to Your Excellency's message, in which an investigation was ordered regarding the British citizen E.A. Crowley, currently a resident of Cefalú (Palermo), I transcribe the essential points from a report just received from the Chief of Police in that area.

"The said Edward Alexander Crowley, born in Learnington, 12 October 1875, has been living in a villa, situated approximately three kilometers outside town, since April of 1920. He pays rent regularly to his landlords, whose only complaint about Crowley concerns the latter's obsession with painting the walls in fresco. These illustrations, it would seem, fail to conform with rules of decency. However, the landlords have not had an opportunity to see the villa from the time they leased it to Crowley, and they know of the Englishman's obsession solely from rumors which have spread through town. These rumors are fed by the fact that Crowley is living with no fewer than

five women, relatively young and good-looking (also three children, one of which is a negro or mulatto). In a town like this, such behavior serves to arouse and excite the collective imagination in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish, in all that is said, true from false. It appears, nevertheless, that the idiosyncracies which the town attributes to Crowley may be explained as a "Natural" life style. The children, the women, Crowley himself, have been seen sunbathing in the nude. Yet his neighbors have never filed a complaint with this office. Instead, it seems that the neighboring farmers actively dedicate themselves to spying on the Englishman's villa (which, it should be noted, is well walled in) deriving a kind of pleasure out of the young ladies' nudity which, once it reaches town, is exaggerated to nearly scandalous proportions. We have been advised of these things by His Reverence the Bishop. However, our own investigation, conducted with the utmost discretion, has revealed nothing other than violations, on the part of the local farmers, of the right of privacy, which is due each and every citizen, and which the English hold particularly dear. It has been decided, therefore, to let the matter drop, but at the same time to assure His Reverence the Bishop that what is happening in Crowley's villa has not escaped our attention, and that the first violation by the inhabitants of the villa of the laws of our country, will be dealt with immediately and decisively.

To summarize: to be sure, Crowley conducts a life outside the bounds of what is considered normal, but less with scandal than with mystery. It is precisely this mystery that causes his presence to be a source of unrest in Corfalú. Regarding the possibility of his being a spy, or acting in any manner which might threaten the security of the Italian government, we believe such suspicions to be entirely unfounded. One need only consider that his sole contact with the outside world is reduced purely and simply to the purchase of supplies, which is, as a rule, carried out once a month in a local store. From this one would conclude that the women make their own bread, since the villa is equipped with a wood-burning stove, while the meat (assuming they eat it) comes from the goat and livestock farming, to which

this little community dedicates itself."

Awaiting possible further instructions,

Con saluti fascisti,

GENERAL E. DE BONO
POLICE COMMISSIONER

NOTE TO THE POLICE COMMISSIONER

The investigation of the British citizen Crowley must continue. Conduct a surveillance. Make a report. Who said he is suspected of espionage? It is the British Ambassador who is worried about his compatriot. He is concerned that the man's activities might prove detrimental to his country's reputation in Italy. Personally, I don't give a damn.

M.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY BENITO MUSSOLINI
HEAD OF STATE

Rome, 11 September 1924

Regarding the directives imparted by Your Excellency relative to the British subject Edward Alexander Crowley, currently a resident of Cefalú (Palermo), herewith the report of the Chief of Police in that area.

Con saluti fascisti,

GENERAL E. DE BONO
POLICE COMMISSIONER

To His Excellency the Police Commissioner
Rome

The undersigned, pursuant to the instructions given in Your Excellency's letter of 20 July 1924 (File #19328), has with all diligence applied himself to the execution of this delicate mission. First, to avoid any confrontation with the judicial authorities, the District Attorney of Cefalú was informed of the orders received, so that surveillance of the villa occupied by Crowley might be made to conform with the lawn, and so that (should Crowley eventually protest our intrusion into his private affairs) the District Attorney would not take offence. The said Attorney, despite the concern for national security involved with the Crowley case, showed some hesitation. He did, nevertheless, comply with the undersigned's request. This was the reason for the delay in acquainting Your Excellency with what the undersigned has been able, ultimately, to ascertain first-hand.

Surveillance of the villa occupied by Crowley has been carried out by the undersigned, with the assistance of Brigadier Lo Turco Angelo and agent Vasta Bartolomeo, beginning during the morning of the 7th of this month, accompanied by Professor Paolo D'Alunzio, English instructor in the local Scuola Tecnica, who was called upon by the undersigned to act, should the occasion present itself, as an interpreter. In truth, however, his assistance was never needed, as Crowley spoke in fairly comprehensible Italian. The Professor's presence did, however, prove helpful in an instance I will hereafter relate.

At first Crowley showed a certain indignation at the fact that, in Italy, it is possible to subject a person who has neither broken the law nor caused a scandal to an investigation evidently contrary to the elementary principles of individual liberty. Nevertheless, he quickly changed his attitude to one of condescension, even of amusement. It was as if he were playing the part of a museum guide, explaining the philosophy which the people and the things around him lived and were a testament to. This philosophy (if the undersigned may be permitted to make recourse to the memory of his high school studies)

more or less results from a mixture of certain elements of ancient Middle-Eastern civilization, magic and astrology, with elements of a denatured Epicureanism, common in the Horation interpretation of *Epicuri grege porcum.* This is, however, tempered with extreme pessimism. The entire philosophy is celebrated in a ritual of both Catholic and Masonic extraction, to judge of the objects which are used in the ritual, and which were shown and explained to us. Not absent among these objects were, naturally, chains and instruments of flagellation, since in this religion which Crowley claims to have founded, a religion of sun and blood, pleasure is the fruit of pain. But the ritual involves pain inflicted upon others, despite Professor D'Alunzio's assertion that in England it is not uncommon to find such practices involving mutual or even auto-flagellation.

The undersigned has likewise ascertained that rumors regarding the frescos in Crowley's villa are quite true. The paintings illustrate, not without talent, strange attitudes of coition, as well as scenes of perversion and sodomy, glorifying in a kind of recurring ornamental theme, those parts of the human body which decency would prefer covered and unmentioned. Crowley wished to convince the undersigned that life neither consisted of, nor had any meaning in, anything other than what he depicted and practiced, and that, in effect, man's every thought and action derives from those things, and is realized in different forms by those things. In this way, he took the opportunity to declare himself an admirer of Fascism and of its leader, and to say that he was happy to be a guest in such a country as Italy, because, at this moment, thanks to Fascism, Italy seemed to him the country which corresponded most closely to his vision of life. This was a compliment which the undersigned felt obligated to reject. Yet Crowley insisted with specious and contorted reasoning, though not devoid of a certain intelligence. Later, the undersigned having noticed a block of stone, upon which were evident traces of blood, and having asked what its function might be, Crowley answered that sacrifices were performed on it. He added, however, a phrase in English of which the undersigned only caught the name "Matteotti."

Professor D'Alunzio afterward explained that Crowley had said, and I quote: "The Honorable Matteotti was killed elsewhere." Perhaps this was said not without irony.

Insofar as the women were concerned, although they may be presumed to live in a kind of slavery, neither from their appearance nor from what they told us, do they seem to be unhappy. Evidently, they have an unqualified adoration for Crowley.

The children, at the time of our surveillance, were sleeping under a tree. They seem to be in good health.

In conclusion, the impressions drawn by the undersigned are all negative, and would be enough to motivate Crowley's expulsion from Italy. Furthermore, the testimony of his neighboring farmers has been collected, affirming that more than once the women have been seen with Crowley, first one, then another, tied naked to a rock, exposed to the sun during the hottest hours of the day.

I await further instructions,

Con saluti fascisti,

CHIEF OF POLICE A. CAMINITI
CEFALÚ, 8 SEPTEMBER 1924

TO THE POLICE COMMISSIONER

Provide for the immediate expulsion of Mr. Crowley from Italy. The Chief of Police at Cefalú is an ass.

M.

Inform the British Ambassador that the Minister of the Interior has decided upon the expulsion of Mr. Crowley from Italy.

M.

Translator's Note

Leonardo Sciascia was born in the small Sicilian town of Raculmuto in the province of Agrigento near the Southern coast of the island. The two stories presented in this book are taken from Sciascia's collection *Il mare colore del vino*, published in 1973, and are representative both of other stories in that volume, and the recurrent focus of Sciascia's work beginning with his earliest book *Le parocchie de Regalpetra* (1956). Although the author moved to Palermo his interest remains primarily with the religio-political life in the Sicilian *paese*. Like Pirandello, Sciascia's art functions often at a level of grotesque wryness and humor: without the presence of *just* protagonists. In the epistolary short story *The Crowley Case: Apocrypha* (which was written several years after *The Removal*) the small town Police Chief who allows himself "to make recourse to the memory" of his high school education, faring forward with confidence into a hodge-podge of misinterpreted and half-learned Mediterranean philosophies, perhaps typifies best the Sciasciaean everyman. Sciascia's fictional struggles are invariably games of *Perdivinci* (a card game in which the players attempt to lose, in order to win) which are only tempered by the author's remarkable understanding of his characters' hopes and failures.

△

Now

spreading across the hayfield
like a giant crowswing's shadow
cloud only & no rain only the shadow

it's worse, they say, in new jersey,
this drought fostered by runaway clouds .

sphagnum bog out back dried up
as if cursed. black willows
wilting in bud & red-winged

blackbird crying
as he rides the dry wind
come blatant from northeast ridge
white but no rain, no moist
spot for nesting in this
bog now / how

even the horizon's light
tantalizes & what we know of sorrow
cattle lean
& what we know of sorrow,
a dustdevil rising and curling
above dry fernfronds, curld, above dry
moss like accordians contracted
& ashen as
dawn trying to break through
woodsmoked smog which straddles &

locks the horizon into a heat so fierce
song sizzles, tree-frogs
drop
like a dream whose pegged joints
have crackd, oh pale oak, oh lack .

Barren, like a lady of the night,
moves across this Vermont land,

one syllable at a time & as as dry, & creasd
as rolld trousers .
Yet I kiss you awake, saying "now" .

Vermont Farming

under the watchful hawk
day brightens the air
I have been sitting here
for hours paying attention
to nothing less
significant
than this

*

watchfully that hawk scans
the whitefeatherd brown hens
going about their carnivorous business
stuttering along the upturned earth,
they have no other direction

*

hearing becomes tenuous
as early flies & gnats inspect
my meaty form kneeling on rich brown tilth,
my hands tamping good dirt over good seeds.

the moon is distinctly absent
from this enterprise although it is by the moon
I plant thinking of my mother
the sky so blue above me
she said once I was born the day the sun was born
& she planted bright scarlet roses, blue iris
& combed the tangles of my sleep
into wavy black black hair .

Going to Sleep

he doesn't want
to go to bed
he's ten years old
his friend doesn't go
to sleep this early he's not tired he's
wideawake yawning only for more oxygen which
has nothing to do with being tired or needing
he says more than 7 hours of sleep no matter how
old you are which is not really the point he says
face so determined
I cld whop his kisser/don't/do tell him he has to
start getting ready for bed now it always takes him
a half hour or more when temperamental like you he says?
ok now and not three minutes from now I say now
I haven't finished my math homework he says too bad I say you
have been watching the tube glued like a gluon what's a gluon
he says tomorrow I say I'll tell you all I know about it now
you're getting ready for bed and that's that & don't
forget to wash behind yr ears really I mean it I say giving
he thinks him another excuse, aha I send him off to bed
w/ dirty ear-behinds

this is my chance I yawn its a matter of oxygen I go
to the bathroom, wash & brush my teeth, oh its bedtime

Desire

the dark sings.
we wake in separate rooms.
longing I think for the goddess.
she who inhabits the space
between us, not dependent.
perhaps we each turn over,
hands flicking
imagined ghosts away, sentences
we'd rather not moan to each
other, thoughts like water
flowing cool-y through this dark
self-singing.
divorce is no longer an issue.
winter is loose like cold fire
in our bones.
but what inhabits our hearts,
waking in separate rooms ?
hearing starchd sheet moment
& the ache of longing like a mouse
in the far wall gnawing
at what it doesn't know
will speed its babies into ghosts.

San Juan de la Cruz

The Fountain

a version for Karin Lessing,
translated from the Spanish by Eliot Weinberger

Though she is night
So well I know her
Fountain
mounting
spilling out
That eternal
fountain
hidden
So well I know where
She keeps her lair
Though she is night

Though she is night
I will never know
her origin
She has no origin
And I know all origin comes from her
And I know there can be nothing more beautiful
That heavens, the earth drink from her
Though she is night

Though she is night
Her depth cannot be sounded

Well I know
no one may round her
And her clarily never darkens
And all light I know comes
from her
Though she is night
I know her streams
so abundant
Watering hells and heavens and man
The stream
born from this fountain
Well I know
so able
omnipotent
Though she is night

Though she is night
The stream of these two flows
Neither before the other goes I know
This eternal
fountain
hidden
In this living bread
to give us life
Though she is night

Here
she calls to the creatures
And with this water they are slaked
Though in darkness
For she is night

This
    the living fountain I desire
In this
        bread of life I see her
Though night

A note on the translation

It is a curiosity that translation—the most passive, bookish act of writing—often occurs in a fit of anger. Appalled at the injustice of an existing translation, one rises in defense of the poem. (For this reason, Ben Belitt, that textbook of how not to translate, has been an important and positive force: many translators of Spanish began their careers out of rage at Belitt's betrayals of Lorca and Neruda.)

In the case of "The Fountain," references to the poem in manuscripts by Karin Lessing and Octavio Paz propelled me to check the three translations I had at hand. Willis Barnstone's version is now in its sixth printing as a New Directions paperback. John Frederick Nims has recently released his third revised edition in a University of Chicago paperback. Roy Campbell's translation is out of print. I found:

Aquella eterna fonte está ascondida
que bien sé yo do tiene su manida
aunque es de noche

(literally) That eternal fountain is hidden
how well I know where it/she has its/her abode/lair/mansion
although it/she is night

Nims: Waters that flow forever and a day
through a lost country—oh I know the way
in dark of night.

Barnstone: The eternal fountain is unseen.
How well I know where she has been
in black of night.

Campbell: Its deathless spring is hidden. Even so
Full well I guess from whence its sources flow
Though it be night.

Nims had translated three words of the original ("I know" and "night") and then made up the rest. Barnstone and Campbell seemed willing to do almost anything to make a rhyme: Barnstone by stretching ("unseen" for "hidden," "has been" for "has its/her lair") and Campbell by inventing "sources flow" and the convoluted and ultimately (oxy)moronic "Even so full well I guess."

Here was more:

Su claridad nunca es escurecida
y sé que toda luz de ella es venida

(literally) Its/her clarity is never darkened
and I know that all light comes from her

Nims: A stream so clear, and never clouded? Never.
The wellspring of all splendor whatsoever.

Barnstone: Her shining never has a blur;
I know that all light comes from her

Cambell: Its clarity unclouded still shall be:
Out of it comes the light by which we see

Aquí se está llamando a las criaturas
y de esta agua se hartan aungue a escuras
porque es de noche

(literally) Here it/she is calling to the creatures,
and with this water they are sated, although in darkness,
for it/she is night

Nims: Song of the waters calling: come and drink.
Come, all you creatures, to the shadowy brink
in dark of night.

Barnstone: She calls on all mankind to start
to drink her water, though in dark,
for black is night.

Campbell: Here to all creatrures it is crying, hark!
That they should drink their fill though in the dark,
For it is night.

The patterns had remained the same throughout each version. Nims was simply out to lunch (James Dickey, on the back cover, had inadvertently hit the nail on the head: "You tend to forget that the poems were ever written in Spanish"). Barnstone and Campbell had collapsed at the altar of rhyme: Campbell, like an old couch,

showing great tufts of stuffing ("still shall be," "by which we see," "hark!"); Barnstone falling into a kind of baby-talk which he had mistaken for colloquial speech ("never has a blur," "start to drink"). 400 years later, it seemed that S. Juan was still being tortured.

My own version was written, then, merely to give N. American readers some small sense of what Juan actually wrote. It followed the wide road cleared by Paul Blackburn's *Proensa*, where an attention to literal detail evolves a musical complex utterly unlike that of the original. In attempting an exactitude of meaning—not difficult, given the poet's extraordinarily simple, limpid speech—I found it harmful either to keep the meter running (like the hacks) or to retain the three-line stanzas of Juan's unorthodox *villancico*. This will undoubtedly distress those wardens of Spanish poetry like Nims and Barnstone and Campbell, who would prefer to keep the poem in the prison where it was originally written.

—*E.W.*

△

Holly Prado

Sky

it is all string and grass in the beak
then flies so far away that I can't name the color
this ends with promises
I love him

just let me wipe the hair out of your eyes

I cook asparagus but only in may then move on
to summer squash to corn to pumpkin
suddenly it's winter here is soup
always a different set of clues

no wonder my friend who's crazy pretends she can't read
total failure is such relief

I tell him to stop asking me what I think
I think the speckled neck on one dove silly and lively
how can a home be migration
yet there is something in feathers this quick pulse
there's no choice
I'm not alone anymore
my friend walks the same few shaky blocks every day every day
twenty years of this for her and more to come
untouched

all right
I can eat these meals this noise as large as the whole yard
let us amaze the people who fold their arms and dare us
he and I look at each other
we have learned nests flying hunger rocks against the tree
let us have no peace then
the promises begin to work in us

balanced on telephone wires landing on fences circling the seed
it's the right weather it's forever the right weather

Jerome Rothenberg

War

. . . . . .
he is (they say) a general with tits
down to his knees
he whom they call "the mother"
whose knobs they pinch
stifflegged & lonely
like a cloud adrift
past maps of Italy
bunkers where he swallows
the macho fluids
hates the sexual residue
but thrives from it
in the collapse of centuries
the generals
still up to their tongues in shit
demand it
in their talk frail jaws
& squeaking old man voices
carry across the room
the war not real
the death of boys a caution
he is the bride the others sell
at weddings at parades
he inches past the other generals
hungry fingers spread apart
under their tongues

beckons the young men to his breasts
& prongs them
electric emissions from his radios
go forth electric flags
& well-phlanged lady admirals
shadow his nuts
the perfect delivery begun
—o art—
—o life—
he sings the memory of his lost tubes
blue uterus
the birth of perfect soldiers
mother warriors
a hissing army slides
under his ponds its bugles
sound a single "h"
deflowered dreaming
the general drops from a winged motorcycle
over Asia
rides past a dozen skies
spent veins ejaculating
milk blue sperm
over his eyelids
the corners of his mouth turned down
in gratitude
his blue teeth colored red
the shreds of boy flesh hang from
shining below his gums
the generals spangle each other's stars
they bow to him
at sundown in the fishlight
"my flank (he croaks) is tubular
"my hand is at your spine
"the ants climb your medulla

"where the sand burns
"orange
"pink
"the final rodeo's in town
"even the clowns ride bareback
"truth comes slowly
"if it would come at all
the wagging old tongues squirm the squads
resume encounters
in a hole a wormy mattress
where an old man like a goddess squats
the young boys fondle
his dry tits
he dreams old wars & new ones
hears the sly plunk of mandolines
over the Gulf of Suez

Europe

for Pierre Joris

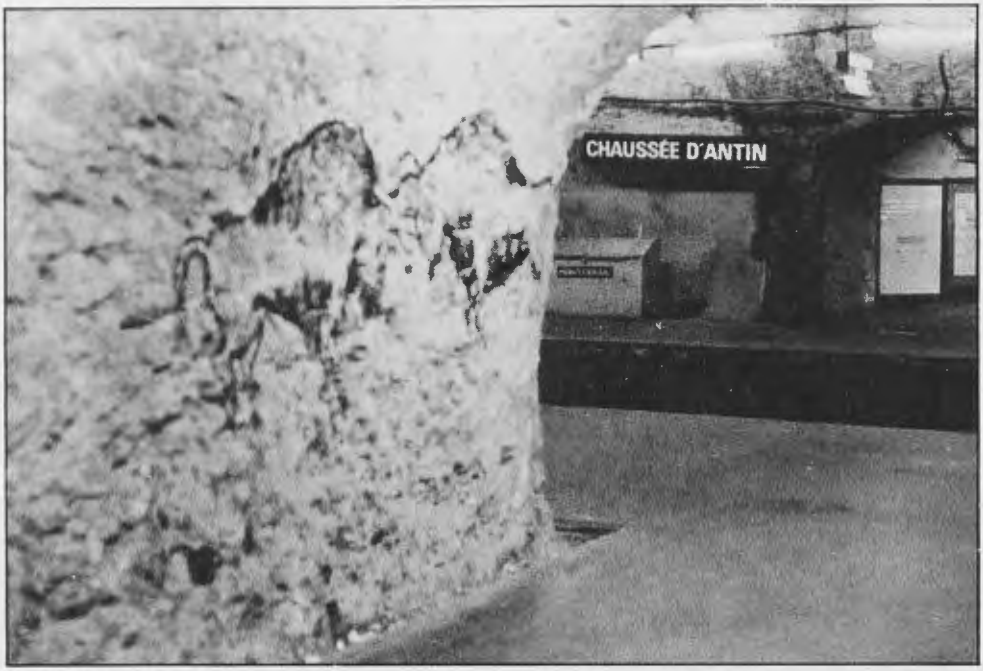
mind the gap
the sign at Clapham Junction
reads, the train
pulls out for death
the messenger called satan
in the sour pub
time-honored
pilgrim
with toes jamming the bar-rail
hoists his pint
a yard over his skull
the suds stream
moistly
the street dissolving
into Europe mystics
& dead rabbis
circuits of generations follow
the Belgian factories like ghosts
behind us do we ride
the train, asleep
the passengers tangled in our dreams
where spiders become birds
birds lunge at us
angry but thoughtful never

bite us on the Rhine
a boat waits
sadly inflating with the generations
we move beyond
old dutchmen
searching for nails in shallow water
"it is impractical"
the mother says she cannot
lace their shoes
forever the children cry
the Dadaists in exile
somewhere in these fields
o LONDON ONION
bring us the death of Europe
the news delivered
fair & square
echoes the Europe in his eyes
the tongue protruding
Europe that cries for nooky
like a king a shadow monarch
his lusts spewed out against the helpless
maidens & slaves
the energies of empire
dimming
only his memories remain
he gobbles up old photographs
the dukes of luxembourg
gremlins of zanzibar beneath his bed
an eyelash trembling
clogging their rosy stews
sad Europe lover
presses a finger down her throat
they kiss & vomit
often men with bowties

women wrapped up in colored beads
& gauze
the death of Europe is their dream
lost in the other century
the journey through the stones
of stonehenge cathedral
towns & tea rooms
now manned by strangers
Dada ghosts
with dreadlocks Europe's tongue
stuck to his teeth
his failure to conceive a language
haunts him it is five o'clock
again the lights go out
a turkish heaven
rises near the bahnhoff
the future is no closer
than it ever was
the mind is searching for the mind
hello, tomorrow
sing our lips
the foxy face of Europe
—now my own face—
smiles down on us across the gap
old trickster for another day
another avatar
gone down the drain

Bastille Day
1981

△



FRANÇOISE JANICOT
Station de Metro *Chausée D'Antin*
Paris, Juillet 1981

Hayden Carruth

Who I Am

THE SHORT TIME since I began teaching has still been long enough to show me that most graduate students, to say nothing of undergraduates in their blest innocence or of other poets in their thousands whose manuscripts I encounter yearly, do not distinguish between the words *image* and *metaphor*. Or if they do, it is fuzzily, glibly. It seems an especially distressing instance of the general decay of language. For my part I am a niggler when it comes to words, and I am content to be so, though of course acknowledging the final impossibility of precision.

After Imagism, with its reaching back to Symbolism and the extreme metaphoricality of Oriental art, one can see and understand how, in the evolution of sensibility for the succeeding seventy years, an image occurring in a poem became a signal, a Pavlovian stimulus, for the poet's merely inventive faculty to come into play. The result now is poetry clogged with metaphors; usually they are disparate and, as complements of the poem's main structure, meaningless. I have said that Robert Lowell's poetry is a fair example of this, and I say it again, with the understanding that I could name many more who are both like and unlike Lowell in every aspect of poetic practice.

Years ago the Objectivists announced that metaphor and its inevitable outgrowth, the consciously manipulated symbol, are illegitimate because they arrogate to the poet's personal uses certain properties of the object, suppressing others and thus wrenching the object away from its own wholeness and identity. I liked that. It seemed to dovetail with other parts of European existentialist thought in the years of mid-century. If, as Auden said and as I and many others have said in different terms, human intelligence is "supernumerary" in the universe, what right can it have to involve itself in material process? None. The biblical idea that the world exists for mankind's convenience is turned upside-down, a colossal inversion after four or five millenia of belief. It is not accepted yet by more than a sprinkling of the populace. Then what are we to say about the exploitation of the world for human ends? Is it human nature? I would prefer to say human, i.e. perverted animal, instinct. I am not sure that anything properly called "human nature" exists. And of course the exploitation is evident, appallingly evident—a fact. Even today, with some hedging, scientists continue to act on the proposition that the power to reason is what differentiates mankind from the other animal species. So do I, but I believe "the power to reason" means "the will to dominate." Intelligence is the perversion of instinct. We cannot not use it, but we must somehow, by force of self-denial or power of self-transcendence, bring it into consonance with the superiority of nonintelligence.

I am straying. For my purpose I should narrow the question and ask: what are we to say, in the face of philosophical consistency, about the thousands and thousands of metaphors in poetry of the past that thrill us each time we encounter them? More particularly, what are we to say about Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, who together invented modern poetry? Can we say that "L'Aprés-midi d'un faune" is an illegitimate poem, even though it works better than any other poem of its kind in western literature? Shall we throw away Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Char, Stevens, Levertov—almost everybody?

Perhaps metaphor is inevitably built not only into our instinct but

into our language. Even the most doctrinaire Objectivist would not shy from "the birdsong of evening." Yet we know that birds do not sing, not in any sense that has a true connection with our use of the word. Can we disclaim *birdsong*, therefore, on grounds of anthropomorphism? What about *wave*?—a word chosen completely at random except that I wanted an Anglo-Saxon monosyllable. Which came first, the motion of the hand or the motion of the sea? Partridge traces it to "ON *-vafa*, itself akin to OE *wafian*, to wave esp with the hands, ME *waven*, E 'to *wave*,' whence the n *wave*, a billow." But this is too easy; it doesn't help. When I look under cognates I find Latin *uibrare,* to vibrate, which is "perh akin to L *uipera*, ML *vipera*, a viper." Well, this is more like it. A snake undulates. A snake is an archetype. But Partridge does not affirm the cognancy, and he goes no further back than Latin, not even to Greek, with no speculative Indo-European root, in which he usually delights. And suppose he had done it, had tracked the image back to Sanskrit, would we even then know if the hand was snake-like, the snake sea-like, the sea hand-like? No. Metaphor is a as deeply and obscurely implanted in our cognitive procedures as any other equal, but no more than equal, viciousness: sexism, rationalism, the urge to quantify.

When Zukofsky's *A-24* was published, with its four lines of text and one line of music going in concurrence from page to page, I wrote to him—we were corresponding regularly—and said, among other things, that my experience of reading the five lines simultaneously was like lying on the deck of a sailing ship and watching a point of St. Elmo's fire on the mast-tip swing back and forth across the constellations. Louis replied (though I quote from memory because the letter is elsewhere): "If I must accede to a simile, then let it be an exact one, like yours." But the simile was total fabrication. I have never been on a sailing ship in my life, I have never seen St. Elmo's fire at sea (though I have in the woods). Upon further investigation I find that St. Elmo's fire is most likely to be seen during a storm when the constellations would be hidden. Obviously Zukofsky had never been on a sailing ship either. It shows the frightening risks, philosophically

speaking, human imagination is liable to. Zukofsky and I were both making fools of ourselves. But at least we had the sense to do it in private and for the fun of it, with a mutual understanding of what we could permit ourselves in those circumstances, rather than on the public page; which is more than can be said for the great preponderance of poets working today, including most of my good friends.

Reality is a false hope.

Metaphor is the falseness abstracted and ideationally embodied.

The fact that absurdity exists as much within oneself as without does not relieve the poet, or anyone else, from the need to stand against it, defiant for the sake of supernumerary humanity.

Here are three lines from a poem called "in the Hawk's Eye," by R.T. Smith:

> Some of us live down here
> at the center of his circling.
> We watch him caper in the wind....

Smith is a poet whose work I like. His perceptions are keen and personal, his feeling is strong but never strident, his mind is acute (as in that "some of us"), his writing is tonally, texturally, rhythmically gratifying. Moreover he is a countryman whose vision of nature is similar to mine in its mixture of menace and pathos, and he can write of these complexities in simple words, something I often cannot do and hence admire considerably. But I do not like that "caper." Why? Most of my students and friends would approve that word expressly, would applaud its originality and therefore the apparent authenticity of the experience or perception behind it. Nor can I myself find fault on that account, for although most large hawks glide or soar in their circling flight, I have seen them (accipiters and falcons more than buteos, I think) fluttering, feathering, maneuvering quickly for the precise angle of stoop; in effect, "capering." Is it the anthropomorphism bothering me? Maybe. But if *birdsong* is o.k., why not *caper*? For that matter, is there anything in the meaning of *caper* that limits its application to human beings? No. The dictionary is quite clear. Yet I do feel that the word primarily describes a human action because it

implies a human feeling. Only at a considerable remove and with a certain inaccuracy may it be applied to hawks, and this remoteness and inaccuracy—unfitness might be better—overcome in my mind whatever Smith has gained by his originality.

(Smith's new book s *Rural Route*, Tamarack Press, Syracuse, N.Y., well worth reading.)

Think of the recurrent passage in which Pound described the little lighted candles floating out on a slow tide in their paper boats at nightfall, a rite for Tammuz. They are precisely descriptions or picturings, the simple scene without metaphor either explicit or implicit. The language is Pound's, hence an almost transfiguring clarity, with nothing twisted, nothing partial. Yet the imagery is laden with meaning. The Cantos are a treasury of such images set down in purity, without the forcing of metaphor. And exactly the same can be said of Frost's imagery, e.g. the woods filling up with snow.

"Intensely seen, image becomes symbol," said Roethke, and his poems too contain many examples.

Like everything in the mass of human intrusion upon natural order, metaphor is a vexing question. Can we deny the fact, or the psychical propensities behind the fact? I see no course to take but to avoid a doctrinal position. Since metaphor is fixed in language and probably in human imagination as well, and since the great poets give us metaphors beyond counting that in fact do function, we can only bow, as to the inevitable. But this does not mean we must give up our good sense. For myself, I believe that metaphor generally does not work as well as direct statement, and further that the tediousness and friability of most current American poetry is owing to the overuse of metaphor more than to anything else. I wish Smith had written "soar" or "flutter" instead of "caper." Pound would have used a more original word that was nevertheless still true to the *hawk's* identity, not the poet's or the reader's; or he would have used the plainest words he could find, giving them the fullness of original meaning through his remarkable spontaneous strategies of syntax, tonality, and measure.

Four summary admonishments:

1. Use metaphor sparingly and only when it accords well with all the poem's other components and is fully integrated with them. Never invent a metaphor for its own sake.

2. Give up the long-standing notion that metaphor is somehow inately "poetic," "the soul of poetry," that which conduces to "awareness," "the shock of recognition," etc. Granted, the poetic faculty is a synthesizing imagination, but what it brings together are relevant and compatible feelings, thoughts, and words, not extraneous and far-out irrelations. And the bringing together is a natural thing, not an artifice. Comparison, simile, metaphor, these are the rhetor's tricks, methodized imagination, taught in the schools of rhetoric (creative writing workshops).

3. Intensity is what counts, as Roethke said. As others have said too: Levertov, Hopkins, Blake, Swedenborg, Longinus, etc., etc. Intensity of perception, intensity of experience. To see, to hear, to feel. It is not easy, but without it no true poetry can occur. Nor may it be counterfeited, or its lack made up by verbal invention. Stephan Dedalus believed in "the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature," with appropriate Joycean and/or Irish irony. Leaving aside eternity, I believe in it too—without any irony at all.

4. Today especially, in the extremity of the human existential predicament (for one cannot imagine a further extremity that will not simply remove human existence once and for all), we can no longer practice the will to dominate through more and more human imposition upon things as they are, things in themselves, imposition of whatever kind and in whatever sphere, intellectual, artistic, or material. We must acknowledge the equivalence of all idenities, including our own. This is not philosophical idea-spinning. It is practical in the most immediate sense: we cannot survive without a total inversion of attitudes and values. Who knows if it can be done? But my own wish, at least, is to be counted among those who tried.

△

Andrew Robbins

Christmas 1978

Arm in arm, earlier we had walked
through the weak yellow light of the solstice,
the electric stars, and watched, behind the hard frost
on the florists' windows, the pale labia of orchids replaced
by the poinsettias' red, angry bursts—
how martial blooms impose their candor on everything!

And dusk found us sitting at your window again,
listening to the misery of cats in the alley,
even the thought of our need grown heavy,
heavy, as the blood in our heads banged around
and our tongues went as they would, went wild...
O, how their wet lashes punished our love,
love gloom-red, love half-eaten, love
bleeding as though chewed by every mouth.

In the stars above, or below, among the albino weeds
that grow up in darkness under the house,
poco a poco crescendo, I can hear the clatter of dice,
the click of bones snapping in place.
But do we know the art of evoking happy moments,
the pieces that fall so easily away
like the wings of charred suicides and overdone hens?
Can you remember the beautiful love-child
whose body we believed rested forever
in its bedclothes of the forest and the snow?

Is this the season when her membranes
will bloom once more, rubious in our bed,
and we shall look and see her whom we killed?

There is an obscene self-consciousness where the thought
of ourselves, too sticky, closes in, like a goat's stomach
that's been butchered out to hold the rest of its body.
The shadow of a branch was thrashing against the window pane,
and we could feel those dead leaves, the color of earthenware,
the color of brains hanging in high in the ash,
begin to bully the day among them.
As the sun set you began to talk of disappointments—
how our words reach, how the reaching never reaches.
No, it was not a happy time of year. The stars
were dying off and on. There was no scent of straw
on the virgin's breath. It was not
the last hour before any birth.
The flower of your face had broken, each lip
like a failing ember. In its halo
even the moon shunned us,
just as it seemed to refuse the sun, the same
rejection of light, love, which compelled
the remaining landscape to turn crazily, to fall
like a rain of mice into a madhouse,
everywhere around us so that we could not run.

Ibidem

at four in the morning
I hear the train-howl alarm
quotidian undraping
the dim silhouette
of the bakery
the foot of depot hill

through two miles or more
undulating closer
the sounding of day
of time returning

same as my father
heard light
years ago &
rising hungover
knew this room
the paper-green petals

round the windowglass
run wider now flooding
deep at the bottom
a grave ambage
this breaking shines in
and behind the pane

two jays are cawing
in the air's green shallows
their beaks unfold
a raucous depth
where the trainsong goes

but out his chapped throat
whose cough is it follows
that I ask what o'clock
whose cough it could be

from his bed I know
my brother Joe turns out
it is his low faltering
his lineal moan

yet unsafed by the hour
and the train wakes another
I smell his sweet apron
his anaphoric shot
I hear the tardy

jingling of his bakery keys
& daddy fresh from my cradle
through the bourbon honeysuckle
you go lurching out the door
that never heals

A Hieroglyph
for Joe and Mark and Angela

Brothers, sister, having only each other,
as we are of them and ever instead,
of those foregone, whose tears are our flesh,
one another we believe instead of our dreams
where by a ladder's edge the blood is drawn
from the leggy teenager as she runs
out and down, toward us, with her tipsy Adonis.
Or still other tales wherein we are born of the wind
as it grazes the styles of some magical flower. All maya.
Mom and Dad simply gave us away.

But we have failed together in this blood-warm eighth month,
been gathered by chance into grandmother's house,
I to paint it and you to depart with your belongings.
And under the hyaline, plagial air, with its higher blue so close
to autumn's, I feel love among us throbbing
like the printed throes of four candleflies
on this white, new-painted door,
burning, a degree of perfect understanding,
some lucidity of time and blood, a reliance
ripening that words might ruin

Ahead, green lampions are shining out
through the horn-skin feet of the mountain,

and, kindred, white behind us roil the final moments of wake.
Shortly, again, in the former distance,
we will see how the prospect anticipates,
as always, our passion to avoid it,
and how, in fact, we have only each other,
that our love is made fast in this singular pain.
My brothers and my sister, we are of them and I love you,
as I have loved you, ever instead.

Mark Karlins

Snow White

to live always with children
is to be haltered at unity,
door that opens inward

rose trellised dusk-cottage
to play deftly at house,
be mother to small men

rose soft mouth
door for outward, apple
thru which the world enters

Perry

A geological staircase
where personality erodes to bedrock
the vestiges the little oil lamp of the heart

a little bird figure
grown to bloom from ice a swan
its neck cropping to great vertical phallic mass
in ice
there are no soft gods
no heart to bridge the muscular
blank parts of face to meadowed soft sun

north is a transparent pierced mother animal
a bowed mastadonian form in catatonia
a frigid snow white a wife in an evoking
seam thru which seeps a Cain's voice

"Perry, you believe you can find the end
and return in all ways to the same room
a dark blue suit to dance
an old flame in the ballroom flaring to sun
an antiphonal agate in ice
that warms, a hold like a large soft door thru to nostalgia
where the faces of children blur to the blue tinge, summer,
where you sit in your fan cooled soda-fountain
an unseamed brother to yourself

where the white of waiter intersects with the orbit of
hunched-mastadonian-cain,
in his hand a frothy glass giving off a scent of icy chocolate,

you, Perry, while the dead, souls,
great slabs of meat sit in refrigeration.
you want to sip your dark ice with a creamy sweetener."

the farmyard is infested with rivers.
fish's mouth
toothed continuous wagging jaw,

rock-door
in pregnant white sow on her side,
hill side hollow
daffodils in the Dutch-American mist:

cooking vessel
in which chronic twilight foams

& the invoked heart embeds.

△

August Kleinzahler

Relaxing in California

They are coming out, emptying
into the plaza of concrete and fronds—
food handlers, clerks
going home.
The sky is blue, skyblue; blue
buses line up at the curb.
We are on our way home
before the sun gets lost in the western sea.

To the hills threaded with gold
we go.

Down sidewalks, under sills
where music hangs down
by no thread at all,
home.

To our shaded valleys
where fugue after fugue dissolves in the loam.

Downtown,
where little boys play at rocks
and chophouses smoke.

Along this pivot's luscious course
sky turns the blue
Mommy's Chevy was

and t.v. sets go pock pock pong
under the clear crisp sickle moon.

The Interior Decorator on Sunday

Those strange and translucent scampi in lantern hats
who prowl then vanish into night's big hole
are here, shorted-out, hard
to pick up in the neutral air,
but afloat between ceiling and carpet.
No, they are not. They are off
across the ravine of bison grass and dead shoots,
over the boulevard and gone
to spin or park on their filament's last inch.

On the wall is a spot: the painter sneezed
...or dirt,
or it is a cousin back from the dead
yearning to touch brows.
The spot is not monochrome; red is with that gray.
It is...a cell beset by virus.
Really, I don't know. So much business thins me out.
And now voices approach: they are spheres,
textured.

Dejection Between Foot and Brow

Mr Moo heard stuff 'round the trough
ah me, dumb
like a yoke. Iz cumulative
you know
till the hole's plugged
and what it is backs up
to the doors of Penny Palace.
The racket, man
in that arcade—those slobs
at toy war go unh, unh night and day.
Remember
the world, Beau
2 miles high
so any chair or bough was bright
like the eye-fur
burnt-off.
Birds just shot through
the arch
screaming,
Jeeeeezus, my feathers
my pretty little bones...
I remember
where was that
in Troy, I think—
or some dry hill
out west.
It's years now.

Song

Death for the quip
in a place with no bounce.
Ask nothing of the river wind
that could shake this heat.
These blocks
of sorry, pitted brick
are instructive
like tree rings, maybe
or rot.

Elders on cafeteria stools
stir their Sanka,
breaking
strange winds
that prophesy last things.

86

_____,' she said. Past
kindness,
unkindness
down came no hair. Thus
ends the tale.

No meal of rant
No billy-gruff jig
No divots raked
from the moonlit sod

The last light lit
is the magazine shop's

with its color photos of gash
in baseball caps and knee socks.

△

The Letters of Edward Dahlberg and Charles Olson

Introduction: Part III

The Final Feud (1950-1955)

Edited by Paul Christensen

"At its best," wrote Martin Duberman, "Black Mountain showed the possibilities of a disparate group of individuals committing themselves to a common enterprise, resilient enough to absorb the conflicts entailed, brave enough, now and then, to be transformed by its accompanying energies." Edward Dahlberg had lasted but two weeks at the rural mountain college; his memory of it was of a den of "slatterns and catamites," an academy of sloth and madness. Olson came to its rectorship just as the college began to founder. He governed over its demise, even though he created a durable literary movement from among its remaining students and faculty. The poetry of Black Mountain arose as the communal household crumbled; Olson parcelled off the land and used the money to keep the remaining, shrinking center going from month to month. But rootlessness, itineracy, isolation are the vision of Black Mountain poets; their poetry is distinguished chiefly for its effort to penetrate the alien condition of the land and make it "home." (The most frequently cited dichotomy of Olson's early poetry is that between an "out" and the "in" of *participation mystique*.) Most of Olson's group at the college had been recruited from New England, until Robert Duncan joined the staff in 1955; when Black Mountain closed, the members were scattered to all parts, like seeds in the wind. Black Mountain art is a vision of struggle and isolation in the American desert of the mid-century; every member of the original group under Olson, including Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan, has gone off to write like a surviving Ishmael, after the great ark of fellowship had gone down. The "self" of these poets

and writers is that recording instrument for measuring that which is not "I." Here was a college of Pacific Man, post-individual Ishmaels, in the language of *Call Me Ishmael*, those who could anticipate the renewal of the West after the Age of Ahab, the Odyssean era.

After the college closed down in 1956, the poets who drifted west or east found others who were curious, even envious, of their uniquely communal experience there. Black Mountain as a generic term for this poetry has come to stand for a *fellowship* of poets more than a particular vision or methodology; it has often been ridiculed as a mere coterie of Olson. But the essential dogma was that the self was preeminent, not the group, not brotherhood, those lingering phantasms of individualism; the self was not indivisible as to identity, but an atom of the collective human awareness; every self was another eye of Argus looking out into the world; groups were merely arbitrary hierarchies that limited sight and understanding by their very own secretions of identity, those membranes of "belonging" that actually separated and controlled the members rather than united them. Dahlberg believed in the fellowship of scribes; that art was a bond of love among the artists. Olson saw unity of thought and vision only in the art, and not the artists, who were temporarily those intruments of consciousness making do with their lives. In putting self above all else in art, Olson had underscored the isolation of the artists in his realm, islanders of the gloom. Olson's deepest friendships—with Dahlberg and Creeley—were creations of letters, and not of habitual contact; they were themselves functions of writing, aspects of a literature they all made together. Creeley accepted the situation, indeed, may even have preferred the working advantages of separation and written communication; Dahlberg deplored the letter, and insisted on the proffered living "hand" of friendship to any other gesture of amity. It will turn out, however, that Olson's published work will consist of letters more than anything else: letter-poems, letters of vision, but *letters*, words sent through the distances among these various eyes of *polis*.

Duberman was attracted to Black Mountain essentially to study the community it created among that most intransigent of groups, artists; his book, *Black Moutain: An Exploration in Community* (1973), is more often a testament of discord and open confict. Here was a corrosive freedom that ate away at relations; conflict sprung up the moment hierarchy settled into faculty life; as order faintly spread among some members, disorder was its only

rebuttal; disorder and open feuding, even scheming. There resulted the experience of mere numbers of persons, each off to himself in pursuit of his own enrichment, in which any compromise to the group was a painful surrender of independence. It was in this atmosphere of discord, the dismantling of the college, the dwindling of enrollments, that Dahlberg made his final, bitter entreaties for affection to Olson, in which their friendship rapidly deteriorated and came to an end. By 1955, both writers were fully committed to their separate visions of American life; Olson to lament its heroic past and to argue its redemptive future; Dahlberg to castigate the whole experiment of a nation as a failure of deepening tragedy. Olson had been increasingly more productive in his work: *In Cold Hell, In Thicket*, published in 1953, was his first full-length book of poems; the first ten Maximus poems were published by Jonathan Williams in Stuttgart, Germany that same year. Other poems and essays were appearing regularly in the journals *Origin* and *Black Mountain Review*. Olson's reputation had been building slowly ever since the appearance of "Projective Verse" in *Poetry New York* in 1950. But Dahlberg's writing lagged behind; he blamed his publishing difficulties on the poor critical response to *The Flea of Sodom* of 1950; he wrote essays for *Tomorrow* and *The Freeman*, but he felt himself to be "blacklisted" in reverse, by the Marxists in New York! The New York *Times* occasionally commissioned him to write reviews, but its associate editor, Harvey Breit, published few of them. This and other snubs by the New York press drove Dahlberg to suspect that he had been conspiratorially kept out of print by his enemies, among which Olson was slowly coming to be implicated. With no other target for his resentments, Dahlberg heaped his invective on Olson, and began to see in Olson's confluence of Marxist, literary, and egotistical forces turning his best friend into his enemy.

Like fate, the letters move inexorably to contempt, suspicion, verbal lashing, attacks and counter-attacts, as each goes further than the other toward breaking up their troubled friendship. There is something gruesome about the verbal struggle; it is in deadly earnest but waged by men of genius who raised the hatred and anger each felt to a charged eloquence, brilliant oratorical flamboyance, a *beautiful* violence, and frequently to the most touching gallantry and proposals of truce. The letters reveal the sordid enmity of the arts in America; they peel back the public image, the polished personae, and let us into the dark world of suspicion, neglect, struggle for recognition,

boundless bitterness against the commerciality of the book world; they speak of a moody life of genius and failure, poverty and arrogance, ideas and the invincible materialism of the American public. The letters turn against the writers themselves for lack of a real contest with their aims and visions; if Dahlberg had had a press that cared what he saw in the American present, Olson's silence would have been a blameless quirk unworthy of notice. But there was no public for his work, no critics, only a few mildly curious souls of the left who spared some kind words for a book of perverse obstinacy: in another country, perhaps, it would have raised controversy and notoriety for its author, but not here.

Olson knew all of this, and had experienced a similar neglect for *Call Me Ishmael*; but he was partner to a fate and do what he could, it was impossible for him to speak favorably of Dahlberg's text. He forced himself to take notes, and to presume to write his critique, but the words would not come—he loathed the little testament of Dahlberg's pathos and misery. In time, Dahlberg's accusations hardened him and made him fight back. He refused to see how his own ambiguous responses were the root of the book's failure. Dahlberg refused to see that in his friend Olson was the clue that perhaps the book was wrong in some fatal, profound way. Dahlberg had decentered his suffering and transferred it to the world; his true parable lay in his own personal confessions of a Jew in America—a rootless, visionary believer pining after the Mediterranean source. Dahlberg's genius was to capture the wanderings of the last straggler of the Exodus, who had been flung out too far West and North into a land of atheist merchants who had no other value but the goods of the market. He had hoped Olson would understand his vision, but soon grew weary of the dilatory progress Olson made on his review. Instead, the old American tragedy of letters was again reenacted, a myth of its own: one writer must renounce the other and quit the relation in pain and agony. After Olson's death in 1970, Dahlberg, near the end of his own life, reserved his kaddish for Olson in *The Confessions of Edward Dahlberg*, published in 1971. In Ch. 33, he tells the whole story from his own version, stressing his fatherly role to the younger genius, whose letters saluted him with "Edward, my Edward," Dalhberg ruefully remarks. "Olson's fervor for me ebbed, and I saw his scab of pride," he writes, and "his principle renunciation was myself." The reason: "He had an ungovernable impulse to destroy himself." Requiem:

> He is in the ground now. I have grieved over him, and then again, my soul has been dipped into the squalid marshes of wrath. I have taken the oath never to allow a stranger to cross the threshold of my fragile identity and call me friend.
>
> I shall always love Charles Olson and condemn him... it is the human way.

Both Olson and Dahlberg survived the friendship and wrote their best work in the years remaining to them. They acquired each other's books as they came out, read them, commented to friends about them, but never returned to the friendship after the final feud of 1955. The covenant between them was fragile, as fragile as that between Emerson and Whitman, Hawthorne and Melville, Pound and Williams, and so on—the necessity to believe in one another's visions. Dahlberg was devoured by despair and Olson was not; there fell the shadow of their end. The break-up reminded Dahlberg of the parable of Cain and Abel, brother-artists who work and toil after their visions and ultimately must fight each other to the death.

△

[217 Randolph Pl, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
monday [August, 1950]

my dear edward:

i have sd so much about you, now to speak to you is an act of the strangest familiarity! And to enclose *y & x*, which was to be an act of intimacy, after i have used it to breit, snow and kruse, as (and had i better, to woodbridge, whom i abhor?) as lime to catch them on the twig of a job for you, is also strange

all of which proves how only discrimination matters!

as of wesleyean, the smartest idea i have come up with is kruse, cornelius kruse, professor philosophy, who, with snow, gave me the little the place gave me he is a thin dry high literate, but he has

power, was two years ago head here of the Am Council of Learned Societies (the circus top!), and is, with Millett, pretty much the boss, I gathered, of the honors college you should have no trouble engaging him, for he is pholospher enough to feel the edge of a fine mind (if its sharpness is unclawed!), and gentle enough (though it is the faded flower of weakness) to show heart: his wife katherine is "literary"! i suggest you call them when you arrive just on a friendly basis, friends to friends of olson let yr charmism do the rest, for i have cued him, by letter, of the possibility of a post and also of the short appearance of the FLEA

as of reviewing i have not yet come up with any addition to breit i have accomplished, in such places, the common discourtesies you and i are such experts at! but i'll stew over it, have asked harvey to tell me if he knows any characters in such places who might give credence to me on you, and shall do likewise to any suggestions from you

(the best idea i have, is on the reviewing of FLEA: you should make sure that Laughlin sends one of his first advanced copies to Stanley Edgar Hyman, in Westport, Connecticut this guy bracketed you and I as the only succesors to Lawrence's Studies, in one of the literary reviews recently, and i Plan to be in touch with him by correspondence some time soon if he should take to FLEA, he swings, at the moment, the kind of reviewer power than which there is no other (he is another of those bright yeshivas, but he is the only character about who is aware of mythography as you and i are now writing it, and who we must woo along, so long as possible, despite the lesions we may see or find in him: he is a tool, to be used:::::: i say this to you for your ears alone, dearest friend—don't blow it, one day, if you should get sore!)

one idea writing to snow was, albers: where he is known, he is mighty but my major reason for thinking either you or i ought to get out of him a letter characterizing your power as teacher, is to offset what has already been used to murder me and undoubtedly would be so used against you colleges have a filthy way of asking

questions of each other in the dark because you probably state that you taught at black mt, i should imagine that any place would write them and who would be describing you? natasha goldowski, david corkran or raymond trayer!

(i anticipated it a little, by pointing out to bill, that it was these three who ousted you, albers and myself - accurate enough for our purposes)

well, ed, this for that & the very best of fortune (i'm holding my stomach, and sending the little boke to homer icehouse)

& let me know as soon as anything is interesting

love,
(CHARLES)

55 Morton Street
Apartment 7
New York, New York
August 15, 1950

Dearest Charles,—

I shall make up a list, as you suggest, to see whether we can make some Noise in the tops of the Mulberry Trees. I do earnestly wish, Charles, you would write a critique on THE FLEA. Lucre we don't hope for, being men of cush, it is enough to erect the Temple at Ammon, or as Cuthites to found Colchis, and the brazen rivers along osier bands. So, my fine nautical Tyrian, we who smart for the nymphs in the Euxine Sea, or go to Cadiz, and there cast up the obelisk graven with the dolphin, or settle in the mountains with Ham or Baal-Peor Cyckopes, we with the dove, and the serpent in our hearts—for what are our hearts but Ophite oracles, let me too not be without that food from Sidon, Damascus or Gihoh, without which we

cannot be fabulous.

A note came from Richard Aldington: I had asked the London publishers to send him a copy, and he writes, having read the first two parts, so far, "with much respect for your [l?]avish and prodigal writing," and being, as he says, weary unto death of modern ramshackle prose, that "now you come along...with a fierce apocalyptic prose." He is in the south of France, at Var; there are so few left of that irascible, sage tribe of writers that it was good to have a note from him. What can I hope for from the newspaper Centaurs? Since we live in a day when man is too depraved to hear the word, and can only write himself money-changing phrases (do you know that Carl Van Doren, having worn out his heart on the radio, the television, and Benjamin Franklin) died a few days ago.

I am sending out this morning a letter to Nevill in London, asking whether the copies have been sea mailed to me. I think they have, and as soon as I have them, you and Constance, that summery reed by the warm Nile, shall have your four books.

Last week my baudelaire review appeared in the Times; you can learn nothing from these hack squibs save how I hope to get some cummin seed for my table. I am still hunting for Maximus of Tyre. I have a 1766 translation of Virgil, whom you disrelish; but the the Georgics are sweet thyme, and do not avert your face from the wind that blows that sweetly; the pipes of Pan and Tammuz are in the secret groves as well as in the holy temple of Jerusalem. Do not scorn Virgil, nor Callimachus, a stout grammarian who knew some enigmas about the tutelary gods. One godly line makes a learned heart, and Virgil has many; and even dour rhetor Milton can teach much to Keats and Olson and Dahlberg.

I shall be looking for your heady, Dionysiac line in Poetry, and thank you deeply for the acknowledgment. I thank you for not hiding me in the earth before my time.

Now, I've got to read an urchin volume for a little Mammon, ay very little, for the Georgics, for the anointed table, and for Rlene. And the last shall come first! And a note to Peter Owen in London to

fetch you and Constanza the little osier volumes.

So if you will not do the critique, but insist on interring the book in some Sidonian mound near the marge of the Pillars, where mariners take their dories with lamentation and trembling, going first ashore to pour libations to the Nereids and to offer prayers to the Trident, the Serpent at Sais, and to Poseidon who blesses the oar, before passing through the Gates to noxious Lethe, then may you in a moment of blasphemous inattention write a lettuce eunuch adjective like Waldo Frank! But after this torment, may you then return to King Aeolus, to the source of the WINDS; for there the MUSES chant, as they sit on the purple kelp, and heed the lowing of the sea-calves, going to their oceanic stalls; and after you have composed a perfect quatrain, may you then admit that a friend buries his friend with the same myrtle, cypress, and Plutonian spade and implements as his enemies.

I am told that Eugene Debs was an affectionate man, and kissed his friends with prodigal soul, living then when the pederasty of Caligula and Ham and the Apuleius was not so rife, or at least was subterranean, and civilly hidden, and so I send you that same token of friendship, and love, notwithstanding the shoal of catamites that simper and fleer at the spirit and the healing fountains in the wilderness of Beersheeba.

I have the complete works of Smart now published by Routledge in London. When I lay hands on some money, and get, I pray, some fall teaching, I shall order it for you. Did those two visionary apes, Tworkov and Ibram Lassaw, who does stalactite sculpture in some mystification material, come to see you. I send everybody to see you simply out of a bountiful and overflowing heart, jades, courtesans from Styx and Cocytus, dilapidated whores from Toledo, shipping clerk scribes from Memphis Tennessee Egypt, churls from the rivers and mudbanks of american pragmatism and knavish acquiesence, but what does it matter, who arrives; what is of greatest importance is he that receives them. We wait, my friend, for the Angel at Mamre in the sacred and private precincts of Pisa and the soul, and all other

guests are rude intrusions jarring our cadences, and marring some form which we have wrenched from Vision at Peniel. O my Timon Misanthropus, I, too, know the wiles, and all the pulsant circumlocutions by which we eschew baboon, infidel, scurrile men for whom we pine, and smart, and bleed. For a maxim I will take unto my bosom Herod; for a gnome can so cure a man that he has the stomach for all the knavery in the world. A man then that can write some healing or curative or prugative line has sufficient energy and has that goodly, genial climate in his visage to recieve him that cannot [?] those high nullities, and I've got an East Wind in my belly, and some rough boreal blast in my head, and I had better come to a stop, and wait for the Harper, and the woodland lutist, and Silenus to give me the song, and the dulcimer, s[ha]king knees, and the Ass, lest I be the ass without the song and the dulcimer.

Your garrulous, fond friend,
EDWARD

[New York, New York]
August 17, 1950

Dearest Charles, —

I sent you a special delivery the day before yesterday, or earlier, and hope it got into your hands. I doubtless disturbed your deep Cyclopean sleep, and they say that though these men, with the wheel-eye in the front of their heads ate men, they were skilled at building memorial cenotaphs, temples, lighthouses, were as tuneful as the Sirens, and were probably the progeny of the men af Anak.

I gave your entire list to Laughlin; the book is supposed to come from the binders this coming Monday, and is to be published about the 12th of September. I put you on the list for another copy. Have not yet received the books from London, and have written to find out what has happend to them.

Don't misunderstand the tenor of my special to you. I should like very much to have you do the critique, no, not for lucre, that you know is just buffonery, but for the pleasure I should receive from your yea. Then if the book should not have just a subterranean audience, it might not be so hard for me to get another book published, whenever that will be. I am hoping out of the attention that might come from this book to get some sort of college post, so you see, Charles, I do need that kind of help from you. If I tell you there is not a single person to whom I could appeal, save yourself, to do this (outside of Herbert Read in London), you might believe this to be wily hyperbole. But it is the whole truth.

Got a letter from Elizabeth Sparhawk Jones; she saw the Baudelaire review in the Times; have some fondness for her, but she has a tongue, laden not with myrhh or the hesiodic honey, but with gossip.

My warm love to you.
EDWARD

[Postscript 1:] *over* [written on reverse] I shall send out 2 copies today to Canstanza—a small parcel came just a half an hour ago—from London—then one [Airmail?] on to you Monday or Tuesday, & I still owe Constance one more! Is that right?

EDWARD

[Postscript 2, written round margin of typescript]

Just spoke to Harvey Breit about getting [a book to review?]—[heard] you spoke very enthusiastically about the Flea. I told him that pleased me deeply. I think he likes very much hearing from you—
[at top of letter] R'lene an ardent admirer of Melville, had, of course, "Call Me Ishmael" in her library when we met at a party, & considers it, as I do, the *best* Melville of a maelstrom of the Melville—rascals [who speak] in such silence than by [their roar] of praise!

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C. NE]
Monday Aug 29 50

Edward, my friend: do forgive me. I was in a sort of hell, had descended again, to try to speak with someone—and I think you know how the living can disrupt such conversation, break off the appearance and unanswerable speech of those whom you have tried to bring to the other edge of the trough, there. I'm sure it was that, rather than, that I was troubled as to your request I try to box Breit in until he gives me your book for review ((Laughlin reinforced it, by the way, later in the week, in a letter to me on another score, (on releasing, as he was most willing, both the poem and the title of THE PRAISES for this book of verse which will be published October 1st (Golden Goose Press)).))

You have me very troubled. If I were asked to do the Times review, I'd do it, for the reasons you advanced, that, such a review might serve your other necessities. Follow you here, absolutely. But it would be a usurpation of my forces and my senses of you to do a "review", a form I abhor. And that, plus my distaste for "using" Breit who left me myself so exposed in the same place, leaves me still with a huge reluctance to write him again. I would so much rather leave this thing to his doing, on the base of that earlier letter, if he so chooses. And meanwhile go ahead working on what is my own plan, to do a considerable critique, without reference to the magazine where it might appear, and then, when it is done, send it out ((This is the organic way in whch I have worked now so long, that any other conventional method—or arbitrary one—especially where it is such a major thing as your work, and my first real grappling with it, for critique—would be scattering, to me))

Well, don't be worried. I will go ahead keeping my attention on your book. It is the imagery which I am now studying. (The major state-

ment, of the narrative by parable, as against all contemporary narrative; and in distinction from the other "prophet" parts of your own book, pretty clear in my mind, but the imagery, which comes so thick and fast, it is a more difficult matter to get behind you in. And there is this other possible solution to the Times matter, that I should be going up to New England soon, and can make a call on Breit and get the thing, if it is not settled, thus settled directly between us. For I know this lad, a little, and know how resistant he is on you. (He has never gone to the mat with you, Edward, and thus is routed by his own failures.)

I see that neither of these plans solves your immediate difficulty, that you want a big-time notice for leverage on the akademicicars, that time is important. But you know, in your heart, that I am no good where time is, though you jibe me, that it is Anak or Tyrian or Celtic of me to go slow, you also know, in your head as well as your heart, that it is not so, that my practicalities exist, only in another relevance. For I should want to say nothing of Edward Dahlberg which did not stand in the same mortice as the thing I might say of Herman Melville. For Edward Dahlberg is more than my friend: he is of my own substance, a personage of my own fable, and I heave him out with the gravest torment, as if it were parts of my own flesh. I am not practical and realist at all, where such is of my own concern. These are the sources of my being & my image, and I do not do things with the shamelessness I observe my contemporaries are so prone to.

Nor must you think, or say, Edward, that it is not at all mortal of me, that it is an "ideality", that it is a wretchedness in the face of my friend's needs. For it is. And I see that. And I will do what I can do to undo same. But do not impugn my innocence. It is my only gift.

One thing you did not do, that I want you to do, is to explain to me that sentence in "Bellerophon":

Bellerophon, astride Pagasus, addressed his Furies, the raging, lambic hoofbeats, each regards the perfect wisdom of high Zeus, 'Only he who is alone can be wise without being double'

(it is not your incredibly fine ambiguity in the quotation, but the phrase "each regards the perfect wisdom of high Zeus': what is the meaning of your syntax, here? which does "each" refer to? just, please, for my understanding, fill in the syntax.)

((((I am so foolish to think that I, or anyone, can so extricate your meanings as to make a critique which will stand alongside the FLEA. Yet, that is what I would try to do!)))) [in script] IN CONTRAST TO H. READ—look an idea, & worth more than me: why shouldn't the *Times*, by air mail, ask READ, for the review. He has a large following here. And the *Times* might give *him* a full page! [typescript hereafter] ((((I find this out: that what one does with your "prophet" pieces, your "revelations", as against your parables (which stay right in place, in themselves, belong, are left alone) is, to make an anthology of them, to pull out the "gnomes" and rejoin them, to each other—

it is the same thing one is led to do with the image))))

It is your "history" that bugs me, the suck of personages, events, images into your own vortex, where they swirl as ps., es., ism., of the micro-Ed, when Ed is there as "I"; but in the "revelations" the history goes off a piece and stays somewhere in between Ed and—what?—the historians or poets who previously used them, from where ED got 'em. It raises up the whole question, of how, what form forces all such things to their knees, makes them servient to that emperor—how, in fact, the god gets inside.

It can be so another way: you may remember the 1st piece of my work

you saw. Anyhow, the curious thing is, it has come up again in this way, in this opposition: the "heroic" vs the "ethic". One of first reasons why your narratives are of first importance is, that you have broken the lyric "I" and the rational "I" completely. You have, therefore, made it possible for your own "I" to take on the force of the "Hero". Thus ethic is disposed of—which has fed on the mediocrity of life as it is. You allow in (fr the Ixion wheel image, on) a multiple man (it is not so important as it may seem to those whom you know daily, and who know you, that it is Edward Dahlberg).

For such reasons I should be tempted by the proposition to go too far, to say that the "ethic" steals back in, in the "revelations", because, by chiasma, that where Dahlberg is not folded in to this wonderful multiple "I" the Dahlberg whom we know, who knows us, is, by the very loss of the myth-force, allowed in, and ethic comes with him!

But this, of course, is not true enough to invalidate the very things said that I, or anyone, would make an anthology of: the wisdom needs, my friend, to recieve the same shredding that Heraclitus' has. And become 130 ultimate sentences.

Well, that for now. And do not be troubled. We shall do what has to be done. And it shall be done, if not in the big spread stupid place, in a small place where it can be properly done.

My love to you, and
my faith
CHARLES OLSON

[55 Morton Street
Apartment 7 L
New York, New York]
august 29, 1950

dearest charles: —

I should be at a coistrel review-mess at this instant; but there is a fine letter from charles arrived at 7:30 this morning, which was good, as it got to me the shower, and then to the bakery to be off to my rlene's apartment to coffee and sweetroll her. but then returning, i thought it better to reply and go to the reviewing public-stews later. i should tell you, and this is in darkest secret, because of ann hathway winifred, adder brach, that rlene (she is 25, with the dark, moist eyes that bettered those of lady fitton that slew shakespere, and a very sharp reader of melville; she has read all the books of that poor, moaning troubled dust whom the rascals are not showing at the newstands), and i are to be married shortly. we are bound for detroit to visit her parents this week-end to fix a date.

of more tidings, i signed an american edition of the flea to you, which new directions should be sending out this morning, and i still owe constanza one more copy. does she want me to inscribe one to her, which i have not done up till now, because she wanted it for friends; but tell me, please, her pleasure, more english copies have not yet come, and i could send her another american one, and don't worry about that; i would rather have my book in her delicate, chaste hands than give it to some akademic stable-boy of american culture.

now you ask me, my good friend, to give you some appropriate explication of a passage in the bellerophon, and this essay really belongs to rlene and to you, and is dedicated to you, and about you and me. well, good friend, i, too, am one of the stupid, drowsy oxen, having fed on asphodels for some years in God's Meadowland, and now having in me but mountain and bare tree stupidity; i am a sere trunk, not as tall as Anak, but more stolid and statuesquely clownish. i also have that blood-unwillingness to explain what you could misinterpret

more profoundly. i am only laughing a little, but not really; remember that sokrates went to the poets to ask them to interpret their images and they did not know how. there is something in our river and glebe and sheep inceptions that forbids us to explain what we wrote, we not know how. and, honestly, i would feel a little showy, gaudy, doing some balaam braying, feigning moloch soothsaying in the secret groves, were it in dead earnest [,] and the earnest in this manner are surely dead) to give you a scholia, a piece of fatuous exegetics; it would not be blood-sport as it is in making book or a trull or a fine my lady the doxy, and you would be bored, and most uninstructed, and i should be by caitiff premeditation a fat oiled fool.

so now we come to the same point, saith friend ox, after the lordly spermaceti sac is emptied and the book is done, to friend anakim. now for the matter of the review in the times. let us be most plain, and even plainer than that, spread in the merde-sheet, even from your noble hand, would cocker my vanity, and be doves and lucre on the market-tables in the temple. some of me wants that, and urgently needs it, to get a post in some money-changing college, and to maintain a seemly, orchard-bearing wife, and even with you on the earth, without rlene, i walk alone on the planet more lonely and hurt and image-wounded than God. I should like to make a book or two more, if the Great Truth of all the apple earths and fish in the salty underswelling seas; if He that walks alone, from star to planet, being Space Himself, and what is more Alone than Pure Space, not even Time, which is another manner of speaking of Lord Space, seeking two or three Companions, also earth-hurt, and slain by the Image, will permit it. You should do all that your soul commands you to do, nor would I desire to encroach upon innocent Cordelian blood, asking of Her who is our Muse, our Fealty to the perplexed, bilingual heart, to give what the Alchemist Himself cannot yield for infertile, dunged skin hid in Aecus' Cave. I know, Aecus can be driven out by the club and lion's skin of Herackles, and not by you or me. I will probably get, and this is not nose-sniveling, flunky petition or so help me god local 12 waiter's union oath (for in my own heart, too, i don't care,

knowing and believing that God will provide the lamb for Abraham, even after the times' tomb-tombstone either or 800 word review—either he should have written another book or better, not have written one at all. The critique you propose you suggest, coming slow and meditative like the ruminative thoughts in the hunkers of the cattle of seth and enos, would be an anointed table for my cup and my soul. so do as you please, and let harvey breit, the de luxe pederast with the low, murmurous voice of hairy esau, do as he will, or as he tongues, for the pederast cannot will and so must lie, and lie until the villanous world takes its ultimate breath. another word of news in the world; at the new direction office, barbara asch, who does the publicity, said it would be very fine if i could get a statement from mr. charles olson, who is a very good Name. Despair not, the merchants of toledo, the clothiers from barcelona, and maritornes, of hair of glisteringest gold, trumpet your name, and every one runs to the brothels to look again at the whores to see the metamorphoses; but we ride away from this whoring merchandise accolade to the glades and the fruits and the oxen-cribs, and make our orisons

have i told you all? one of these days i shall so smart again for a beauteous apocrypha boke, by a man of tyre, or an obelisk-builder of the house of cush or ham, and then let us see what the furioso heart can spill, and i shall not ask you nor you me to explain what we wrote because that is what is so much the inexplicable fable and allegory, and the mazy, star-shod lodestone.

all my love for your Genius and your jubilant friendship; when the prophet bloweth into the ram'shorn, the anointed shall sit beneath the tamarisk, and saul and david will reenact their texts, for there is no time save in the heart of nabal.

your loving friend,
EDWARD DAHLBERG

Let me know, i beg you, constanza's wish; for i am one to wish your lady's wishes.

[in script] P.S. I am very happy about the book publication of your Poems, and [ ] wait for the [ ] Poetry.

EDWARD

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Tuesday [August 30, 1950]

my dear sweet wild tormented friend: i want to say this, to assuage you, if,
what i said yesterday caused you any Saul

that i had to have my innocence
to play to you in public!

Or that my trident had to be picked up
if i were to ease you, a little ease,
my child!

Look, my fellow Fish: do not worry—
there is a wedding in that ocean called the Stars

(One thing. I am terribly worried about another son, Cernovich. I have just heard he is now dancing again, and walking twice a day up that dangerous hill. It is clear, with his heart, he is toying with killing himself. When I saw him this spring I knew he was eaten, badly. But he is a proud man, cannot be spoken to direct. Nor does he write me, or you, or anyone who could help him, perhaps. He wishes only, immediately, to be in power. And so he asserts himself on boys and fools, offsets himself to those who are less foolish, less boyish perhaps.

It occurs to me that something as simple as the receiving in the mails your book from you might be of help, might be the act—which a letter wouldn't—to remind him of, how not singular his pains are. Which he knows, but doesn't know (because he is so young but then, rimbaud. (but then, american

Now there are only a very few days left before he will be gone. So do, Edward, if you possibly can, get off a copy of this wondrous revelation of yours THE FLEA to this poor bitten creature whom I also love.)

CHARLES
OLSON

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Wednesday [August 31, 1950]

Edward!

Delight, Delight, to you and to Rlene!
The Vineyard, for YOU BOTH! the Quest!

And to tell you I have just joined—in two pages of a letter about you to Ernest Brooks, of the Bollingen—your name, as Visionary, to that other Discoverer of What Grapes There Are, H. Melville, saying, exclusively, that you two men [in script] *only* have made Fables & Parables (you will accept, I hope, One Harbinger!)

Your letter, in fact, is so Palpable—I almost said Giddy, in its Delight—that I feel like Jacob's Best Friend, that night after Seven Years (Fourteen, I correct myself) that Ancient Modesty!

Go to Bed, Both of You, for Joy

love,
OLSON

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Wed Sept 20/ 50

Ed:

Bad business. Had planned come visit you on way back. Instead, as Con told you, came straight thru (by air, in fact! the urgency.)

Real trouble is, the trip broke me off in mid-going on FLEA critique. (Hell of a time for it to happen!) Will get back now. And push. (Haven't the least idea where I'll come out: you are a tough one, to get down, really to get down!

Found ND copy here on return, with grand inscription, which we both, cherish.

Write: you owe me a couple of letters, and a note, before yr departure Detroitwards to give parents look at ED. (How is all? Yr move worries me. Anything go wrong? Is Rlene & you all right?)

Am faced with difficult winter (another in this house seems too much). But there it is. Spent the day battening down, repairing frames, puttying windows, trying to make out—and the rent! O god, this reminds it. It is due, yesterday! (Haven't it).

And empty-headed. No wish to work. Want to go to some other place. But here is my Circle (with sides, down, and ice).

Enclose answer fr. tidy Brooks, of Bolingen. (Tell me, Edward, what are these moneys—and their conditions? Any chance? Shall ask my Gods to favor you.)

Jas L is sure keeping on yr book. (Like his job with the sheets much more than Nevil, the cutting down of page real improvement. (Res-

ponse on little mags copies beginning to come it. Shall urge reviews. Hope. Anything, a mercy, these times, eh?)

Well, write, when you can. And I shall be less cryptic, another day.

This is merely to indicate I breathe.

Anything else, like you say,
would be an arrogation.

Love,
CHARLES

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Thurs [September 21, 1950]

Ed, that was a mess. For my part in it, sorry. God damn it. Mess. And no use beating over it. There it is. Sorry. A shame.

But just so you don't have to carry unnecessary parts of it, this: I could no more, at this stage, toss off, easily, any remarks on FLEA, as a matter of fact, it is in the nature of, the most difficult thing imaginable. My own work would be easier!

And for the very reasons that you hold should lead me naturally forward, to speak up, about it: that I am so close to you!

It comes to this:
that I am now in grapple with—not one book—but the relevance of the whole of Dahlberg's vision.

(So, calendars, or New Directions, seems—and please, in this, nothing, flint-hearted, dear friend—very very small.

In saying that, I do not, of course, make it small *for you.*
Am instantly ready to see how not small it is, your way.

So if I choose to go ahead very slowly, recognize, Edward, that it is purchased at cost.

Something of that, is what I meant, when I sd: I think about these things, too.

It is such a shame, we should get in a brawl. I was afraid of it, the moment you called. You were sore, and looking for trouble. Inevitably, I suppose. But don't feel too bad. As I say, I intend to deliver, solid, hard, straight (as I did, on the Bollingen: strong.)

If I were not determined to go on, I would ship you, with this letter, all the mss already written. Let me just look at it, to give you a count. (And all, mind you, written up to only the beginning of the Tree: that is as far, I am going in so, that I have yet progressed (my original racing thru Bellerophon, of course, excepted. And first reading of the whole book, for that matter.):

17 single spaced typed pages
PLUS
the Bollingen letter (2 s.s. typed solid)
PLUS
4 pages of analysis of the images, pp (of book) thru 24!

And only—as I say—up to p. 68! (I abandoned total concordance of images simply because it gets dizzy, to do—and, the pattern is so readily reducible—it is isn't worth the scholarship)

Just to emphasize—to extricate you from your suspicions—that nothing privy is going on (except in so far as any rear of writing is privy, thank the Gods of the act, the Cool Ones). And that it is outside probity, as you put it, or Purity. (What probity or purity is there in public place except as there is privy preparations? Would you, of all men, have me careless, be,—what you made so much of—YOUR van doren or brooks? Nuts.

It comes to this, ED:

[arrow, added in pencil] I smelled this, you must admit

I am flunking on the practicals, clearly. But it is not because I am careless of them, thoughtless. It is because it happens that you and yr book come to hand at the moment that I am ready to engage them, not, as another book, but, as, the vision of a man who has been my mentor.

(In such circumstance, there is bound to be trouble. Only, abide, dear friend. You, your work, this life, is worth it.)

All sounds too god damn big & noble. And thus the hell of it, makes me sick of the whole business. And I shall have to hold, like mad, not to turn away. But do not, my friend, blame me only, for this sort of feeling: you'd better have thought, than to have led in, on, why haven't you answered New Directions? Jeezus, Ed, who the hell is N D? Really, who?

In such a real business, who, such marketeers?

Are we in a serious business or not?

ONE I take you very seriously: TWO I take the art of writing very seriously: THREE I take it, that books are men, and not to be toyed with, that there is value, which each man must go and find out. FOUR I am engaged with setting down what value you have.

In such circumstance, the question is, huge.

Anyhow, I wish the hell you'd sat on yr hands. But you didn't. So there it is. Let's carry it, lightly,

yr friend, &
fellow worker

OLSON

[217 Randoph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
thurs 9/29/50

Ed: I don't know. Last night, when I read yr letter, I was angry (at old charges). This morning, when I reread it, to write you, your own hurt—"stung", you say—comes with it, from beginning to end, and I am tormented, that you are so. For it does no good, that I might argue, the cause seems so ill-proportioned to your hurt. For there it is, you are stung, and I did it. [added in script:] (Or did I?)

I say, I don't know, simply because it is much more intricate than this given event. That is, you do pitch writing into love (friendship). And so a "statement", as they call it, not done, becomes, for you, a denial of *you*—not, as it would appear to me, a denial of a "system" which I think it is of some moment to keep clear of. (You will imagine I have acted likewise, did, in fact, same publisher, like problem, same time as of FLEA.) But there we are: this does not seem to you either of any moment or but more proof of yr case against me: that I am inhuman and cold and unyielding and act without those Mediterranean parts of the human body which you feel you do possess. For you wld take it, as you so warmly put it—and made happy by—I am yr first friend. [added in script] And should act a way you declare.

Of course, of course. There we are. It is true. I am. (And do you think—my friend—that I am so "pious" (or choose any number of other adjectives you toss at me, moral adjectives to describe so-called moralism), that I do such a thing "coldly", confident I am at all right? that I am not all you say I am?

But you see, this is where I *am* deceived, I begin to think. I have been fool enough to believe, that, an examination of yr book, done—as I sd, some weeks ago—as roundly as I have tried to do things on Herman Melville's books, say—would be an act you'd

value, that that "sodality" (you could not have chosen a more evil word, to one who was raised in the Catholic vulgarities) you talk abt twice, is not some New Phalanstery, but an older one, of men who look upon their work as undone, who want, from each other, to go ahead to make another work less undone.

But even here, I feel the helplessness of making such statements (and this, my friend, is what is so killing, that I do not find you *care*, here, where, to me, something—as I sd, last week—lives, which is worth *all* our care.)

((I must, here, vent my full rejection of yr whole notion, that the "privy" is what you are getting. (I completely abhor your indelicacy, in using such a word, as of myself, or anyone. Indelicacy, hell. Just straight on, known to yrself or otherwise, these adjectives—these moral adjectives: yr letter is loaded with em.) That I do not express my affection & friendship as you might, is *this* cause for you to sit in judgment on my whole nature? Was it "privy" of me to join you,, in ISHMAEL, to my two other loves, to say, this man was the man who, by his friendship (belief) and his "critique" of my work, put an element, Fool, here, in this book, which I would wish *anyone* reading it, to recognize, as his doing?

It's crazy, straight crazy, the proportions you do not seem to be able to get yr mind around. But I cannot find it in myself to say, I'm right, you're wrong. I can only say, I see it differently—and this, to me, is of the heart of love & friendship—and art. That, difference is. This is, what we call, the life of it. The difference. And it takes recognizing, is not at all easy, or eclectic, or "honest", in yr. sense. And when I speak of "critique", I mean, in this business of writing, just such labor to make clear how, where, what is the fine essence of, this difference. After which, one may say—fr *his* different point of view—its relevance.

I despair to say any of this, because you have forced me, more and more, to ask myself, does Ed care for anything or anyone except

Ed, does he want anything—when he cries, affection & friendship—but what he protests he does not want?

You see, Ed, I have loved your person and I acknowledge, happily, I have learned from you, from all you taught me by taking such care with my earlier work. (It was such a joy, writing ISHMAEL—I have never told you this, I think—to have those mss. you had so incisively done a job on by me as I went ahead each day composing same, the clues they were, to me, and to what language had to do—in fact—and this, now, at this point, seems such irony—what clues they were to FORM. (Form, Edward—which, behind all this disturbance, looms, so large, to me.)

I'm afraid I give it up. As I said to you last week, some way, you involve me in pieties which I am *not* a party to, involve me in presenting you the very false faces you want to strike. (What *is* this anyway? what image do you want, that you so create it to your satisfaction to strike?)

Why do I feel any difference—is in the nature of some crime, to you? That you really do no allow, admit—perhaps even see, any difference in another?

(Don't you see how impossible such a state is? who is, actually, being denied? who?

> ((God damn it, there you are again, it comes out, I am crying, I am denied. The hell I feel that at all, the hell I am that fatuous, or self-pious. I do not feel denied. The fact is, you say, *you* feel denied. Jeezus, what a squirrel cage. Christ. It's no good, Ed, no good—not life, no life in it, no breath, no space. Christ, give it over. There *are* others, no matter how fine you may take yrself to be. (For I do not buy yr doctrine, "we are all dirty", that we are "at best any more than clever worms with moral agonies." This is the deepest mis-engendering.)

This whole business comes out so crazy. You write a book. A year ago

I read it, am very excited by what I take to be an advance in narrative. Say so, to you, direct, move on Black Mt, to publish it. (You see, right from the start, a difference: you see the act *only* in a total sphere of friendship. I see it as such, because it is true, what do we grow by, from, but love? But also, there is this other element: work, yr work, mine, anyone's,—or have you learned from another's work, even where you did not love—or, more pertinent, where the person was not yr friend?) Anyhow, to go ahead, a yr passes, I have, in that time, (due to the story "THE FLEA", shall we say), (as one cause—there are others, of course), for the first time, almost got involved in narrative....

Aw, Christ, again, it goes flat, to try, to tell you anything. (God damn it, that I shld come to think, that Dahlberg, honestly, isn't interested!)

Well, just this. I propose, a yr later, to go right inside this man's work, to see what's there, at the heart, what it is that moved me, that leads me to say such things as I say abt this man, to, say, the Bollingen, to others. To do a thing I very rarely do. But that I also want very much to do—not for him, no, no. Nor for myself, wholly. But for that thing—to me, at least—which is outside us, that "sodality" of which, so often, he cries he is a part: men, writing, since when, since, men (those animals) got sounds, sounds, sounds. (as well as livers & kidneys, in fact, apparently, after they got these organs, which he insists (as, for that matter, he does sounds), in turning into a moral system, or a physiological philosophy, a personal humanism.

(awk, go down,
language)

I set out to do such a thing. Tell him so. And what, finally, do I find? Does he want this thing? Does he indicate it is of any importance his book?

(Nope. It won't work. Again, look: now I'm in the position of making a very fatuous statement: that a man's book means more

to him than himself. O dear. o dear. odearie me. Just fuck it, my fine-feathered friend, fuck it. Of course I don't give a good goddamn whether you care for it or not. It doesn't matter. I'm not doing it for you, don't give a damn. I'm doing it because I believe that a book is a thing which has power, and has value, and that, if I can show what's in it better than another man, then I ought to do it, and that there is value, use, to someone, that I do it. That, this, precisely, is why books come in to being (or, no—you are right, for you it is fame that is the spur, as it has been for so many great men. OK.) But once they are in being, those books, what shall we do with them? *Market them?*

What it comes to, then: all you want is a PUFF (a thing I do not believe in, that, to my way of looking at writing, defeats the very thing I am talking abt, when I say, how important a book is:

(gd it. Agn.

Nor, my friend,

is it *my* confusions. Do not, so easily, content yrself, so easily, assail me. Stop a minute. Look around, at it—just for a dying friendship's sake. Good god. You say, you value same. Don't kick it in the face, then.) (Because it doesn't do the tricks you take it, it should.)

Who are you, really, Ed, to say, what is the well, what the water is, in another man's soul? (I find yr use of that work as literary as yr use of "privy"). (And don't, please, for friendship's sake, at this point quote me (misquote me) Heraclitus, on the dry soul.)

My despair, is, it isn't any use, to talk about it. There is no advance. You are set. There it is.

OK. OK. All right. What's wrong with

that? Nothing. Our sense of friendship differs, as does our notions of books. All right. Difference. I make no more of it than that, cannot place myself in such absolutism as do you,—and give yr game away, I take it, my Jehovah—when you imagine that court "in another life,

and when the parable is done... etc" and who is pure and who is impure (your inversions are transparent, dear good warm-livered warm-hearted warm-friended Edward).

Really, all this hierarchy! All this physiology! All these absolutes! What do they say? Do they not say, "In this friendship, I am the Law, I know how a friend *must* behave—and if he do not, he is damned."

All right, I am damned. I do not feel so, but, that you say it—I have been so willing—do you think I do not ask myself, is he not right, am I not?

The only trouble is, one gets tired of so many commitments to another man's personally contrived (however absolutely assumed) Hell. (O miserable earth, you say.)

One does go along, dragging one's damnation after them, like some escaped criminal, who does like life, who does, with his nose, smell and enjoy a northwestwind, likes a friend, likes to do a day's work, enjoys it, that another does, and, if that work is a book, and comes onto his hands, will take it as something he can enjoy, disagree with, but go on abt in his own fashion—as he finds it, in his devices—to enjoy or do abt it, what he will, thinking, his friend is, like the wind, or the walk, or another person he knows and enjoys, a part of things, things he does more or less about, things that ask more or less, depending upon his relation to them things that he likes—if he loves—to do what he is prompted, not, what some non-existent Law (this is not liberty, or love) is supposed to require of him, as a condition of, continuance.

Look, Ed, let's just not continue, as least on such levels that I am supposed to do something. For I am not, the life of it.

Love,
CHARLES

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Wed 10/4/50

ed: I just guess I am a grrrrrreat pppeeeeeeeeeee—
cock, and all the other things you say. yes, i just guess.

and when you've sd it, what
have you sd?

(such, interests me more than, the tally-sheet, the score-card, the bills of lading, the storage charges, the butcher's scales, what was, what was, we do lament:

> you recognize, of course, you had more to give. I do. I dare say that's why i am, you might say, embarassed that it is you who make the totals

I shall not swap hallowed remembrances, what was, what was. but i will, (must, it was so crucial) correct you, on your drama, of that night, you came to my door (Christopher Street): it strikes me, that Henry Huffam, who had died, had figured—look, again, even here, who am i to argue, which of us: that's the point, any such weightings—there is something deeply WRONG, in the whole procedure. (i walk off)

And that you again appeal to the court of us, dead, for decision on which, of us, is the more—look, it seems to unimportant, stacked against, that you, that i, must breathe It is, (as above): when you've, what have you've....

I think you have written me a beautiful letter. i think it is very straight, with tenderness in it, and it is a true proffer, as of you, an honest business, given your incredible sights. Even its absolutisms, are you.

But I don't know, that—where it is a portrait of me—that it is I. It may well be. I am so vulnerable. It may very well be. In any case, it is the way you see me, and that, surely, for you, is the fact. Well... I am not you. I have to put up with, myself. I have to continue to make the son the father of, himself. So. I have this, what you call, bad material. Too bad, too bad. We'll agree he won't go far, shall we. Shall we also agree he'll go as far as he'll go?

(Even such, as these immediate sentences, won't come straight—that is, they see straight, but—you are such—they echo wrong: ex., because you take me a grrreat peeeecock, they sound back as tho my modesty were put on. Bah. Or sd to cajole. Bah two. HERE LIES, THE TROUBLE.)

I don't know. I am tempted to say, it is this simple, that, your friendship is,—as you imply it is—a greater thing, than mine. It very much may well be. Yet, I can't say that simply because I cannot clear the whole thing from the *ritual* you make of it. It is this that puts a strain in, which, so often, causes the bridge to come down. Now I love to throw parabolas as much as you do, believe, as you do, the absence of ends & projections in lives around us, is, why, there is so little life. Yet, I'm not sure your way of doing it, does it. That is, keeps all these things you talk abt, *in,* inside, as going, advancing, present realities: that we stay *current* to each other, that, in a very deep sense, you allow us to (the frame keeping so much backward to it.)

(To hell with that, any more of it. I want, on my part, to try to insist upon present particulars, to stay inside what is, what is. So I go back, now, to read yr letter.)

(1) I do not know that I sd, that I do not think you value, as you put it, my affections & friendship. To distinguish their way of expressing themselves from yrs, is not—is it?—to say you do not receive them? It has always meant more than I have sd, that you *have* received them.

(2) I stop over nothing, from that point to the end. There is nothing *nothing*, my dear, dear friend—in all those swift & beautiful sentences to be gainsaid. Nothing. As I have sd, this, to me, is you, and I thank you, thank you that it is important that you say it all to me, even, (or the more), that your concern for me (as friend, you say) leads you to wonder if the path i am on as writer is not leading me further into what you call involved syntax values.

That I might wish, that, instead of this lumping, i should have each piece of work seen for itself, taken, for itself, as a part and yet as a separate thing from the whole of my life & nature;

that, by this process, I might feel motion, and air, and a going-ahead (that is, as i am going ahead), gain, from such a particularism (each of us, do we not, alas, have to carry *all* of ourselves at each instand; and it is precisely to be, for a moment, free of that bearing down and in, that we look to our friends or our loves, for replenishment?)

You see, I come back—this whole thing comes back—to, what we have been over before, what you put here, thus: that you think art, or literature, is, friendship. I think friendship is, friendship, has, its own laws & motions, which, because we are writers, but also because it is important for itself, it is—as you have made it—one beautiful and important substance to be expressed. But that it is all, that it is art? (I think it is the story, "The Flea of Sodom"; you say so yourself, when you make the epigraph, "My friend, there is no friend." I recognize, too, that "Bellerophon" is, a substance, form this particular friend, fr your concern over him, me. It is also true that, the whole of the book the FLEA, is, essentially, such a substance. You see, Edward, why I both say, yr letter is beautiful, straight, and also, why, I say, the trouble is, I do not agree. We are, at root.)

I have to take my risk. I remain astonished, that, what you call my

friendship, has been to you,—I quote you, here, exact—"you want and have given me a sepulchral bookish friendship." But there it is: it rests on, yr notion, by paradox, that art is friendship, obviously. Thus it is, that all acts or the absence of acts, are taken to be—that is, acts toward yr writing—as, personal, as, towards you. Of course. It has to be that way. (I am puzzled, if it also follows, that all acts toward you are acts toward yr writing, and thus, is it this way, that my friendship has, perforce, become, to you,—that is, looks that way to you—or, equally, had to be that way, to me—bookish?)

I don't, like, at all, where all this examination leads. I don't like it. But I also do not want you to put it off, as non-visceral, as not, the "logic of the heart" (I question the phrase, but it is yours, and will mean something, to you). Or not to shoulder, as well as i, the weight of it. For these are your risks, as well.

(I mean, you shall put it down, so. All right. And write me back, so. All right. Only, please, please, do not, in your "soul", not hear me. For, I deny Aristotle: there is, a friend.)

A friend
CHARLES OLSON

[New York, New York]
October 25, 1950

dear charles;

The book has been out for close to two months, and i still sit in a room like a pariah and wormy lazarus. i really don't see how you can think i was ever sly about getting attention. you and i know the rotten literature swill business, and if i wanted a statement from you to affirm the book, i still feel you should have given it fast, because the book stands for your beliefs and mine. the n.y. times bedlam continues;

the dudley fitts review has never come in, and petticoat breit is full of double greasy tongue babble, and i can't depend on laughlin. williams wrote a twelve typewritten page critique; he was very moved by the flea, particularly the rational tree, but he's off in oregon, and he has asked me to place it! me, what can i place? i had one gehenna experience to get the book published altogether. there have been no reviews of the flea in london, although i am told the book is having a good export sale! what does that mean? much as i need procurator pilate's lucre, i don't care much about the money the book might bring, very little, anyway.

i wish more for the sake of your own poems than for your refusal to come out and defend the flea that you would dissipate some of those cloistered preciosities; i don't think they are a benefit to your own gifted muse; you say you don't like the word sodality or logic of the heart, and maybe both are bad, but don't worry, i don't belong to any sodality, since i detest the dirt and [ ] religion in the baptist or baptist catholic american, and there is no difference between the two, for art might make the distinction, but there is no [will?] in either; there's got to be a leopardi or petrach or a bocacio in religion to save it from the [ ]geries, and there is none, and i have no use at all for it, getting my religion about seth or enoch from smart. there is a complete two volumes on smart that has just come out, and pretty soon all the filthy slummy pederasts from uptown, the mademoisel elle chic fornication group; the harper and flair magazine catamites and the village dumpy denim fart homosexuals, will take up smart as they have done melville. poor smart in bedlam got a cat cult which is just the thing for the dirty feminines in ny, and i wager we'll have a smart 'revival', which will be the burial of everything that was genius in kit smart in three years.

tell me about the flea critique; have you finished it? i want you to understand i don't mind sharp, nut-flavored criticism from you; but you're wrong about my playing along with any clique, pray what? [ ] i hate to make moral announcements about myself; i think that bothers me more than almost anything else; a man's got to be very

dingy and have a lot of the church mouse in him to tell other people how good he is. i only say i am not the man for trade literature; ive got to write bread and butter reviews now to support a wife, and just to get once in awhile some sun and air and fruit on my face and life. i wish to hell you would get more human, i don't know how a man does it, but when i ask you to defend what your bowels tell you is right and the earth-truth for you that you wouldn't be affected and get ethical with me. save your moral fervor for the lousy gimcrack celebrities im not one and never will be; i'm too immoral for the american to be a trade literary saint, you know that, and there is a lot in us that is just automatic, and that simply takes care of our moral reasons for asking people to do things, without you and i bragging about our principles and what we should do and not do. when you have to get up a pragmatic formula for your deportment with another man, then it's time to take your leave of him, and say he's no good for your liver or for your paracelsus. what is important, charles, is that i'm not really fixed at all; the reason i never will be and will always be centuries ahead of the rotten, staid, mediocre blokes in this country is that i shall always be a devout and religious and earnest servant of homer, isaiah, strabo, longinus, and your maximus of tyre. if i can ever find him, for i love to distraction a great writer before i have read him, and attack on the hurt of my small finger a piebald louse of art without reading him. but for hell and art's sake, let us let our noses be our guide, and let us defend each other if the poem and the book is not an offence to erasmus, and better still, to the top blake, or to the highmost statius, and is some quaint addition to man, who is knowing dust when he is right and true and promethean-livered, and rotten and decayed and fart-arted otherwise.

each time i write a book i hope it won't be so lonely, and i just get more lonely, what with your help, my fine postage stamp and envelope friend; oh i know you would do me your services, but that is no good, and you, more than i, will suffer from this friendship in absentia; for i can still somehow or other teach you i don't know quite how any more than i know how i can write a good line when i have

a learned song in my diaphragm or navel or belly, but let's not go lower, and fall into our modern grecian habits. i read a great deal of plato, but not as a platonist, or for such trite reasons, but to come to some understanding of nature as an evil breathing animal. id like to do some more writing, like the wheel of sheol, and without plato, and i want to go to the gnostics, too, i could have done it, and to your sumerians, and after i have found a form again, i'll write some new old world hieroglyph, and do you think i can be sly or odyssean writing that sort of egypt, abydos, mycenean literature, don't be foolish my friend. i did a piece on bourne for tomorrow, not very good, but i got 50 for it, and mentioned you along with three other books, as clean rebel vision. i call for apostasy [about?] making [ ] learned and julian, and laurel it in ancient metre, and make it a dagger soldier phillipic, and if we do that, why we're vulcan's in the bowels of aetna, for then we've got bowels and aetna in us, and so don't have to worry about right and wrong when we ask one another for a chanting, male yea to a book we say belongs to both of us. i've gotten so i hate anything that is not positively male in morals and art; the penis has to get back into a poem, and I am not crazy about fornication literature as such; but we've got to have a male penis literature, or everything will die out and all we will have left is allen tate, and ransom, who write about meanings and neatness, and call it metaphysics, and what they really mean using foetid feminine platonisms is ugly polonius-stooled meanness.

well i send you some straight-out love, and hope you get the straight, human diction out of your beloved iliad, and all those remarkable tarsian and tyrian scribes; you've got a lot of washington quagmire city to spew out; and please, remember, by way of exhortation, that a moral act is phoenician or theban or aeschylean, as we mean it, when it has also something of the birds and the turds of aristophanes in it; a moralist has got to be always a great bawd if he is not to gibber and squeak like some of our little dung saints who use adjectives like verbs; that kind of misuse of words belongs to a man in the public stews. what is most important than any word you might

have given me for my little book is that somehow or other i pull out of you a leetle marrow boke that is even better than ishmael, and if i rebuke you, remember that i can see your faults better than mine own, for aside from a few rules i don't know how i write, but uneasily find out what shouldn't have been written at all. but let's get the ethic business clean and straight between us; when i do one of those lazar-house cash register books, you can throw all the hills and mountains and rivers at me, but until then lets try to be a mountain, hill and river pome; if we're that, why doll tearsheet, and our lousy, whoring novel were plainness [ ].

EDWARD DAHLBERG

[New York, New York] [torn, and water damaged ts]
November 6, 1950

Dear Charles; Would you please send this letter off at once, It's a bill, and I haven't the money to pay it. My former wife is very slyly trying to seize whatever I have on the cape, and so far has been very successful.

You have been on my mind a great deal, and I have thought about the whole literary purity dilemma, some of which is artistic virginity; and there is also a perplexity, and I must somehow believe that the animal in my nature that cares for Hermes Tresmegistus and the TIMAEUS, and the Book of the Dead has a moral nose that cannot be too corrupted. You know I hate to make protestations about my sanctity; I have seen too many trade saints in the country, including our erstwhile friend, hapless and pious-dunged Waldo, in this sort of role. No matter how you may feel, and I cannot feign any more than you that I relish being smitten, and you must recall that you were the first to put your heel upon my neck when I telephoned you, I want with what religious heart that is in me, to see you come out as a real poet. You must not believe that because I am no Nazarene, and that

when you raise your voice against me, that I bother about who is more or less. I cannot measure myself against another gifted man. I only have some anamorphosis of my own soul when I hear a man lie to me, or some one praise me, and then offers me a wormy, la[zar] hand.

My Bourne piece in the magazine Tomorrow will be out in about seven weeks, and there is a good mention of you there. I am doing a long piece on naturalism, attacking that kind of scataphagous, merde fiction, and am putting rue in my own nostrils while valuing these, by referring to Ishmael, the American Gothic, Rimbaud (Oh, I know there is a great deal in Rimbaud and in Baudelaire that is catamite verse, but the prose poems and the baudelaire joural are worth thinking about), Lawrence, I'd like to go back to our Greek, but there are very base and ugly limits to a magazine piece, and I have no way of earning money, Charles, save by [my] pen. I don't intend to dip my pen in Circe's swill. B[ut] so much for scruples.

Rlene and I were married a little over three weeks ago. She sent you and Constanza the announcement.

Meanwhile, you have my love and faith in your genius. I have a couple of pieces on Pound, one for the Times, which may be out this coming Sunday. He's been in so many ways the good Socratic gadfly of poetry. I have done the Letters to [o?] for Tomorrow to be out the end of this month. During the war I was very angered by his antisemitism, but now that the man is penned up in a dirty, lunatic hospital, I simply cannot be one to hurt him more. For years I was too busy with Attica and Uz and Joppa and that wonderful temple at Sais, where Athene reined to give any thinking to Pound and the others, but I can see that you don't get baited by a gen[?] outside obsidian poetics, that he is very good in some ways. My love again,

EDWARD DAHLBERG

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Tues Nov 7 50

my dear edward: it is the most terrible thing. so very much is involved. i almost do not have the heart to speak. but your last letter was so sweet & whole, i cannot let my failures amputate an answer i very much wish to write.

there is nothing i can say, actually, where an act is all that is called for. yet i put off, put off, that act, not even knowing its issue, frightened of it, yet, looking forward to it (i am, of course, referring to the examination of, the Flea: i was well into it, a while back, when it got broken off, by two Black mt characters coming in on me; and i have not, again, picked it up)

it goes so to the heart of everything, for me, to examine your book, that i avoid it no question But at the same time (why, i say, i look forward) i shall do it, have to, will haul myself up to it, difficult as i find it, to say all That's the trouble, why, I am sure, this thing has come to be a crisis I *have* to say all I cannot, at this point, be partial, or party, or take—as i might want to—part instead of whole (a part, anyhow, the way you have written it, is not a handle by which it can be, said)

((it is weird, how difficult it is, for me to read you: i have to go in by the sharpest sort of bearing down

I am sure this will sound very silly to you, but please do not let it: it is merely the confusion of you as person with you as book that brings this difficulty. You make values yourself, anyhow. And I dare say, you would not put it, that it is you and me, here, in this place, or there is nothing, without a recognition that, we are also, however alike, deeply opposed Or so I think the wall i break the jump at, is, the stating of, my opposition: I am really quite a little rabbit, you know

That is, I am always confounded, at how personal we all are And dread it

It is stupid. But precisely that, too, is of cause: that, for some time now, i have been hugely involved in this very problem, of, how to take up such strength, generally And am miserably worn down, as a result. It could not have been a worse time (or a better), actually. For, that it is to be done, is there to be done, is worth the doing, is a joy

Yr announcement of marriage, coming on top of yr letter, brought quickly to my senses, your own pressures, and troubles. I do hope much is better, much much better. (What did happen, on that Bollingen bizness, anything? did they stake you, or not? What did they say?)

Look. Let this be just a note, to greet you—and Rlene—and to tell you you are much in my mind—*on* my mind. To stuff all silence, that dirty thing. To send

his love,

CHARLES

[New York, New York]
November 8, 1950

My dear Charles:

Your letter has just come, and I am in much distress over it. You know that work is the only redemption for Adam and us; you had better set your mind to the thistles and the briars, and put some words together to heal your distracted skin. Whether you go on with the critique is not of great matter at the instant; you must write, or start taking notations from all the marvelous Greek readings you have done; get together all the gleanings from Boaz's Vineyard, and start at the word-toil. For in the beginning was sloth, and it was a curse to

man greater than all other afflictions except his boredom which was really his idleness.

You must write the critique, should you go on with it, unmindful of me; it will happen, for it is the abstraction that counts most for a poet; the weak and mediocre are concerned with events and nostalgia, and all that squalid detritus of wan and fatherless images.

You might look into Baudelaire's Intimate Journals. Of course, Baudelaire, is the ideal paradigm of the modern pederast, but he has some fine spleen, and a remarkable understanding of the nature of the velleities in us. He knows that the two contradictory characteristics about mortals, free will and destiny are identical, and that is great self-knowledge for the poet.

The Flea has been out two months, and two reviews have appeared, and not *one* in London. Maybe, you can understand now my appeal to you. I have heard nothing from the Bollingen Foundation; I took a chance, but I don't seem to be the sort of man who gets awards. You ought not to worry too much, Charles, about the morals of the artist. If he has the sign of Cain in his forehead, everybody will run away from him, anyway, and he won't be in any pinchbeck and warm sheepcote. There has never been a warm lazy cote for the poet. Remember, too, the patron is dead, and the mediocre man has his dagger pointed at our heart, and he has astounding nose for artistic smells which repel him more than nitre or lysol.

I am taking notes for the naturalism article for the Freeman. I did a piece on James, the cutpurse philosopher, a review, indicating that he had purloined his entire doctrine from Peirce, and got $17 for it. Compromise, my good friend, and I get N.Y. Times reviews to do once in about two months. I am compromising my barest soul to be—crusty Lazarus!

I have a sea-island parable narrative in mind, with Poe and the Apocrypha, the Jewish pharisaical writings, which were marvellous, and which were the source and river of Christ and the scribes and that mad-torn, carnal Paul form Phoenice Tarsus. Would have been better had he made sails like his father did, and left writing to Xenophanes

and to Seneca, and Ovid, and Amos, and the apocalyptic poet of Baruch, and to Charles Olson, and I pray by heaven and that God whose name was never mouthed in a dirty, scataphagous church, to Edward Dahlberg. But, go, go, and write, that is your pining; go, and with the will of guileless Daniel into the burning furnace, for our Ideal Forms and Jahweh and Sais Athene Abstractions.

My love, as always, and my great faith in your gehenna doubts; for only the artist really doubts—

EDWARD DAHLBERG

[added in script to right margin of page:]
my wife Rlene has been reading a lot of american history to me: that's his [Peirce's?] background—it's very helpful

[217 Randolph Place
Washington, D.C.]
Wed Nov 8 50

oh my fooling Doll-Mountain, my big kid, how you go on, picking up stones and throwing puff-balls, and deciduous things. Now its "lies" & "virginity", my looking-only-at-himself, little Glass Hill, o antique Eight St Mirror:

come off it, Reactionary, come into the air, o Auroral One: stop making such heaves/without strikes

o Moral Nose, is it: pah,you. You Nose. Ha (or ho-ho). I can say one thing: it is true, I do not know that you ever "lied". (Ah, purity!). But having sd that, I ask myself what other non-virtue have you not practiced. So, for sums.

And as for "virginity", o Lecher—Lazar: try to regain a little ("virginity renews itself, like the moon," who sd). If you had a little

less personalisms you might have a little more imaginative innocence, my Doll Burger.

(It strikes me, in these exchanges, who uses, the moral nouns, as euphemisms, for acts and facts, for sticks and other devices, to lay on another man's back.

There is a law, here: invert what the Doll sez, to find out, the stuffings. (Ah, Corruption!)

A poem, sd Ecclesiastical, makes no more echo than a
rose petal dropped
in the grand canyon:

You cry, o, my loneliness. Ha. Ha. (I think of a hen man in New Hampshire.)

And as for "our" Greeks. Please, separate me from them, and you, please. I do not know that I open the door in the same direction at all. I take it, it is a swinging door, opening both ways, and I, I prefer the kitchen. I take it, Hermes Tresmegistus AND the timaeus, as well as the Nazarene and the naturalists are broken down humanists.

The

virgin fields, Sirrah are otherplaces, other
times, e.g., downstairs

downstairs, get downstairs, Mister dahlberg

I am mailing yr letter to the Clinic. I do not mind at all, my friend, being "used".

The rime is, abused
OLSON CHARLES

[New York, New York]
November 10, 1950

My dear Charles:

I have your rather wild letter, and I had rather hoped my own letter to you would quiet you and set you to work which you sorely need. I don't know what the Black Mountain characters did to you, or what has brought you to this achelian distraction. I think you are being very roundabout in this whole matter. There is really very little to say more about it. You deeply affirmed a book which you refused to do anything about. You have claimed that I have been some sly Iago in literature, and I protest that is not the truth, although I have told you many times I abhor making saintly protestations about being the pascal lamb in literary matters. I have seen too many stinking, lazy book people do that, and I do not like being the overt moralist. I still do not see that it matters where the truth is spoken or written. Had you found my book bad or a lie, and I had asked you to affirm it, then you would have had all claim to abuse me, I think you are being very affected about purity and the lordliness [?] of people in this land. I cannot speak for you, although I noticed that you were very put off when Rosenberg came to see you so seldom. You call me a reactionary, and you also say that I have practiced "other non-virtues for sum," and my plain and bleak reply to you is that you are a LEAR, and that you have had much greater skill in cunning than I have ever had. However, I do not blame you for being nimble-tongued enough to get awards off of that ward heeler, of the seven Muses, Moe. But I do hold you culpable for feigning that you have not gotten money by lying for it, and by going [?] to disreputable and mercenary scribes, like the late Carl Van Doren, and the merchant, Van Wyck Brooks, for help. If this is not double-dealing in our corrupt literature business, then you are actively [?] mad and unwilling to perceive your own acts. You villify me for wanting some attention in the Times, so that I can somehow get bread, and yet you scurried down to see Breit so that you could secure attention for your book. It is a hideous,

ghoulish thing, all of this, for you and for me; all I ask is that you stop lying about your own ACTS. Every poet, including Plato, and I imagine Dante, and Michaelangelo, has had in some sense or other to be a toady to a patron or to a united cigar store Medici, like Moe. The difference between you and me is that I told off Moe, and when Brooks had the effrontery to write me and say that he had used something from my book, a line out of Poe, which he had sordidly mutilated, and then put into a footnote, I told him what a miscreant he is. Now, I don't know how you or I are to get published, or shall let us say, printed, without being a little base and disgustingly humble, and I imagine you are quite the boulevardier flaneur as well as the skilled sycophant with the Van Dorens, the Brooks, and Moe. How you could act otherwise, I don't know, and I have had to dissimulate too to get a book published. But you're a great stupid pachyderme to accuse me of having written books for lucre, and if you are referring to my personal life, when you say I practice non-virtues for sums, the only reason you aren't more of a lecher than you call me is that you're a damn'd gawk at it, and that is why your poetry the result of so much extraordinary reading and real plain honest labor is for the most part esoterica syntax, and lacks bowels, shit, and fuck and sweat, in it, and I'm awfully sick of that kind of cant. Talk about euphemisms, what do you think your conduct has been. By the time you grow up as a writer, and the man who has in the past stepped out because of his defense of your work, you haven't got enough marrow and integrity guts to come out to defend a book you believe in. You say you can't write the critique because of certain temperamental oppositions, despite the similarities between us. Do you think that bothers me? You're crazier than your fatuous letter. Go ahead, if you want to; do anything to be a poet yourself. That is what I have always wanted you to be. The ways things are, I fight for you and you fight for you. Why, in simplest frankness, is it a truth to lecture about my books to a black mountain covey of catamites and slatterns, while it is perjury to make a clean, inward remark about a book you claim you deeply admire. Why this coarse and craven parody, O my Loneliness;

maybe you have never been honest enough to admit you are desolate, and friendless; it's that kind of unashamed honesty that makes a man a poet. If you scoff at me when I tell you that I was miserable and alone for at least sixteen months, and that the man whose Muse I had lavishly befriended, was such a skinflint and so precious with his time, that he would not ask me once in all that time to come down for a visit. The last time I was there as a self-invited guest you said it was a deeply crucial [one] for your vision. You have said it in books you gave me, and so don't lie about it now. I have been very lonely, and am still so, though much less, because I have a wife and many men, like Aeschylus and Euripides and Nietzsche were wretched solitaries; so what is all this pinchbeck and very cheap laughter in your stupid and [morbid parody ?] don't mind mind a real masculine attack, something straight out.

The truth about you, Charles, is that any of the things you accuse me of are guilts in you; years [ ] you called me a Kansas City merchant, which was just a [ ] remark, because I have never been able to make money, and now at 50, my situation is a real peril to me. How, liar Olson, did I ever make money as a KC merchant? How do I hide behind euphemisms; what lecher do I practice or malpractice that you shun? Why is that so many literature bastards will help you and not me. Why do you cry up a Brooks in a remarkable book, your Ishmael, and soil your page, while you deny me, your mentor, a work for a book you believe in; and why give a name to a Van Doren; of course, he helped you, and; if you remember, when we were laboring for your first guggenheim, I said go ahead and use these literature turds, but don't pull a waldo frank or a horace gregory saint act with me. do you know I went to laughlin to ask him to print some of gregory's poems, and then marya told me she did not want horace to appear in such a company. at the time, i said you were in it and so was I, and besides a poem is good or bad anywhere.

I don't mind being attacked for a low or vulgar act; but you are at fault in this whole matter, and not I. If you are so balefully pure, why did you not wish me to speak to Laughlin; you wrote me quite a let-

ter, you were as skittish as a young colt about it, fearing, my fine, 'maidenheaded writer,' and in this business that is just what you are, that I might spoil your *strategy*. You say, come downstairs, Dalhberg, you have the effrontery to talk to me about being straight and outside about what I do, while you go an practicing these little circumlocutions, and braying like

[last page of letter missing top left quarter, remainder heavily damaged and soiled, fold broken with missing parts; marginalia indecipherable]

/pure and simple small magazine Pisgah. Why
/and not me? Because you are very enterprising,
/iterature spotless lamb. Again, I do not blame
/printed; it's a gehenna to sit alone in
/tudio of your, somewhere in the untouchable
/quagmire tomb city, and even if you don't have
/my own life, and you fleer at loneliness,
/on for you, and would do all that is in my

/attle of the wits, I'm ready for you; I'll
/yours, and we'll let Osiris who weighs
/world, determine whether you are more than
/honest as I am. I'll put my dagger words against
/n a number of letters, who can better the
/mastery of bastardy. I don't want it, and i
/ubtle gifts, but I don't like being falsely
/es I have not committed. We have both our
/against your father and I against my mother,
/You will also remark that in the FLEA that
/, and that is what I have always done for
/and anywhere I could. Though I say that
/love and friendship, I never said one ought
/ise a vile book. I have been very straight about

/ould quit posing as the clean Angel at

/far as you are gifted, no more and no less
a dead language, and ancient past, to recover the [?] lives, and so feign that we are really not dead; that is a very [?] great artistic hypocrisy, but if you go beyond that, Charles Olson the crier for the Roosevelt committee at $12,000 a year, and the chair-boy of Van Doren and Brooks, you are simply saying that somehow or other I have been as much of a sycophant as you. Maybe yes, maybe no. I have tried to keep alive and not put my pen in swill; it's very hard, and I have said that though I must write these reviews for the acorns and the masts, my book whenever I write it, shall be of that desolate desert and rock in Luke. Poe, too, had to live, and he did a lot of potboiler writing, but only a scoundrel will deny that his Ligeia and Eleonore are not original forms and abstractions for which a very poet pines.

If you want to co[ ]ne this vendetta, I'm your servant; I'd just as soon knock your head off when you get fancy Waldo Frankish with me, as impugn some of the churls who are making it wellnigh impossible for us to write and eat.

I send you my love and some of my wit, because I think you need some of it, if you intend to get into an outrage with me; you're a very inchoate and gabbling fool when you're splenetic, my friend; now, if you want to get the better of me in a phrase—brawl, be as cool as the alps, as dry as nantucket; and you ought to be able to do better than Doll-Burger; get at some ideas, never mind the pothouse puns of the vulgus. If you've got some lucid antagonisms toward the Flea, go at the book, and not at me. We need some intellectual [fis?]ts in this doleful, addleheaded land; you're an awful ninny not to be able to sit down and write about a book that so kindles your mind. Write, write, and make it frontal, direct.

I am the friend of your genius even though the monitor of some [of] your half-wit epistles.

[indecipherable, missing marginalia along both margins and at top of letter]

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Saturday Nov 11 50

my dear edward:

yr most moving letter came last night. the odds of it, against my second, which you must have had yesterday, leaves me chewing my teeth. for i have found, when i go by sounds (as i did there) i cause much pain (not even knowing; in a way, not knowing—or at least permitting, as you say, freewill to be destiny: it is a beautiful concept full of terror because it is cause of pain. and do not be eased form it, a little ease, anyway, my friend

but as i remarked to you, as we walked away from the "trial" in New Rochelle, you are in metempsychosis, and, since then, and remarkably, in this letter of yrs, as well as that long previous one (not the one I roared at, say) you continue to advance, powerfully and widely extend, yr reach

it is a pleasure,—and learning—to feel *that*, to hear you in yr quietness phrase as, so: the squalid detritus of wan and fatherless images. Or such a joining, as, nitre, lysol (the sounds, I mean, which are as much the abstraction as there is, permitted, to poets: to bend the will to them, and find out, in them, what more can be done. For the thing is, they do contain, their own revelations, of which a man is instrument.

I venture to think this is also true of, parable-narrative, though, here, I am not acquainted, actively.

But the feeling you gave me (and it was not just yr mention, that

you have a sea-island story in yr air, for music) that you are open and wandering straight ahead, encourages me to go most ahead with the critique. For all I should wish to do, in such a thing, would be, to get to *you*, to dig, to make the run home into yr consciousness of yr work. (I dare say, my cuts at you, have come from a sense, that—as i may have sd—that you were closed).

I would woo you fr all generalization (god knows where you got the idea I am moral abt the artist, —not at all, tho it must be this very thing you play back to me, the abstraction as what counts, which is form, that led you awry; for what i wd undo in you (what you undo more and more, out of wisdom) is, such, as (here), you put it, the sign of Cain in his forehead (the artist's forehead): I don't honestly think you need these positional devices one day more. I think all this is a part of a struggle you maintained against the 20s, 30s, arms for obliquity, but which you have already thrown aside, as used, and useless.

So are yr plaints, you are commerical, or compromised, in these reviews. I don't believe it, even tho, you have not clipped & sent me, and I have not read one, of these same. Yet, I doubt deeply you are whoring. For one thing, you are unable to: yr shot on Peirce as source, is the sort of use which these contemporaries are needing of. So much of yr perception is needed. And I note how much the reviewing Baudelaire fed you, in yr turn.*

[remainder of letter missing]

---

*[Paragraphs 1, 3, 5, and 6 have been marked by Dalhberg, where he wrote "use" in margin next to his loose brackets. It is not clear whether he intended to use Olson's remarks in his own work, or in correspondence with Olson. Editor]

[New York, New York]
November 12, 1950

My dear Charles:

What skulking gnome or rotten mad genius keeps our letters not enough in the rear of our acts so that each of us sends a cannon ball letter or a pot of honey always at the wrong time. Your previous letter so enraged me, all that pother, Charles about practising non-virtues for sums, and virus-guffaw of yours about o my loneliness, as though you were more virtuous than I, my noble Cato on the page, and cynic rhetor of bile in the deed, yea, you and I. By the time this balm of Gilead has dropped into your treeless and ravined solitude, you will have already sent me, by the special dispatch of Mercury who is not better sandaled than your spleen, another enchante conceit and hot-spur anger missive, for which I will then thank you in kind. And all of this may be allright, provided we are each garnering some jott of good beer and tankard and hard latin learning from it. But you decide, my fine writer, for I have just been looking over the ISHMAEL again, taking some notes for my naturalism piece, and I must say that it is a marvellous book; i make some small, niggard objections to a dropping of an article here and there which does not give the line that obsidian thrust and curtness which the verb ought to have, also, and now and then you omit at the opening sentence a thee or an a, and that gives the sentence a little too much of the soft, adjectival feminine pomegranate mood, and I think you sometimes turn an adjective into a verb, which is not at all good. But let anybody say that ISHMAEL is not a remarkable work of genius, and he is as much of a liar as you are when you fall down into your buffoonery bathos about solitude and my dollar-whoring for dollars nobody even offers me; so brother olson, if I am doing all this literature courtesanship for nothing, well, let us just settle it, and admit we are the literature whores of Gaza, and that genius is cultivated belles lettres lechery, as Chaucer and Olson know, only there is damn'd piece of perversity in that man, Olson, who has the gold of Ophir in his mind, and if he

had it in his pockets, pauper Dahlberg, would sure be reaching into them, call it non-virtue practice or pandarism, or beggarism; but you aint got it, save in your astounding spermaceti intellect, when it is at work, and writing, and not just spilling seedless clots of rancour, and so to repeat, in some quaint amerikan way, you're a rahab of amerik literature, and no one can get into Cannan without your spying, and so am I.

I wish in the name of heaven's hell's earth, you'd pack it up, and make a quick Israelite exodus from that sodden solipsism town, and take your Constanza along, and get to where you can on occasion hear some human talk, or at least be near city art fakes, and those pederastic streets, where everything is teeming and dying, but all for art, and that is something for us, even though it is foetid and offends the skin. There is something about some of your letters, and the way they eat into you, that I mislike; despite all your troglodytic travail over words and ideas, you're too idle, and bored; maybe you need some lysol and nitre humanities, to rouse you to forms. Now, you said some very fine things about the FLEA, and you should not think for an instant that I would try to get in the way of your oppositions to anything you said or wrote about the FLEA. I think, and I said before, that we are much too automatic to be bothered about morals in art, when we have to get a little bread. A man is gifted and he fathoms himself whether he toils in a dollar drudge office or for our late brother, the lump vulgus Imago, Roosevelt, or not. Otherwise, we get into emasculate and epicene metaphysics, the kind that seems to kindle your intestines, when I mention Hermes Trismegistus; but you ought to know by this time that like you I'm a quarry-hunter, an analect, who'll look everywhere for his amethysts and Eden stones. I admire very much your fine, original obsessions with SPACE, in the opening [of] ISMAEL.

Well, brother friend Olson, I'll try to get this, special, into your furnaced hands; but since you are a man interested in the Genesis, whether Cain struck Abel first, just remember you showed me the insolence of a wild horse; you are the horse alligator, as you speak in the Melville SPACE Boke, that REAL GENIUS, no doubt about it, and

I'm damned glad that I homaged you in the FLEA, despite the fact that you're a great purity and virginity ass of a Balaam, and this ought to prong you, but you can't persuade me into believing that denying your Canapot yea to the FLEA is not just circumlocution dirt and that you are not the foolish virgin who has no oil for the lamp she adores.

Well, I guess, I am your Father-Image, and either you've got to assume that I am ready for my senilia, or that I am likely to die without further ripening, and get staled in some frozen parable sea moral or first cause, and I thank you deeply for worrying so, even though a part of that is the groundwork for your own artistic egoism, and that is all right, too; for we murder everybody, and call it literature, and so much of amerikan literature is the dry guillotine to which we send those young, green novices of writing and feeling. I still maintain that though literature is Space and the wounded western man's longing for distance, and when a man says that God is close to him, it fills us with the greatest disgust, or that the Word is near to him, we know he is perfidious,—still for all that, if we are to get free from cold, Gothic Amerika, literature has to be friendship and affection, or else we all perish in an utterly homeless and dead hieroglyphic art that will be extraordinary and fatal. Go, if you must to dry, arid, mountain latin gods, and refuse the Mosaic wells, the soft feminine hills of the hermaphroditic Nazarene, and both are mare's nests, but we die, as medieval fascists, with the inquisition rope of Loyala around the necks of each one we embrace, if we exclude for all the damage it has to us, I mean your gushing, liquid, Christianity, we are not men, warm, hot, fierce men with fire and daggers for our closest friends; we are just frozen homosapien who starve everybody to death by the miserable congealed climate of our own resolutions and hermetica distances, very valuable for art, and a great danger to any kind if Inca, Mayan, Mediterranean civilization.

I salute Ishmael again, but if you send me another of your damn'd froward brazen necked epistles, I shall in turn give you back fine sword and bodkin words, although I think much of this is foolery, and that if you have an ounce of outside, unchristian, hard pebble

and Numa rock goodness in you, you would be damn'd grateful for the chance to say a real, flaming spear word in the defence of the Flea which is just perched and closeted in your ear.

EDWARD DAHLBERG

[217 Randolph Place, N.E.
Washington, D.C.]
Nov 15 50

brer edward: You are a kerekter! (out of yr own "Tales") (All thracian & coonskin) (And sometimes, fr the Red-Eye you've drunk, can't even read: example, a whole abusive letter, resting on, mistaking this sentence. Or, rather, what you did not see was sentence, separate, reading "So, for sums." having nought to do with ought to do with moneys, but, with (many references back), the making of sums, the summing up of, you-me, relationships, the ledger of, friends.

(Just to extricate you from your own confusions! To save me, from yr notion that, I think you commercial, that is, on an economic level. Hell, I've seen you blow too many such dangling apples, ever to....And if you be a Merchant, of Toledo or Kansas City, you be a might poor one, where, geld is)

No, lad, or papa, this whole scream, this male shrew what descended on me bitin and tossin fur....Ah, me, syntax—oh, Solipse (shit, Edward, abt Washington, and the advantages of 8th Street, and all such preachins, and interferences: aw jes don bite such bait, Brother American Orpheus

And if you be senile, you is the dad blemdest wittiest old coot that ever drew a phrase from the hump on his back, you Quiver you, you Mississippi Hoot

I can't take you that seriously, Sad-Eyes. Come off that 2 inch stool, Cavalry Man, I seez you, ah knowz you, under all those hoots, War -Face. (You see, I'm crazy, too, fellow hunter, been on the trace too long: take a look at that country we been over, all the skins we've clothed ourselves in, Bro-Butternut!)

I'm campin, in this duck-shoot.

The eye-deer! that you all can squat thar, and make up yure tremblin singlin mind, on what ah's up to here in my clutch (try to bring me down out of that blue into the swamp by shootin at me with my own weapon, I who once took on to call myself a Biblical name!

Now you look hyar Mister Bumblin Boone, ah don take kindly to such back-fartin shootin gallery bee-hay-via. What ah did, ah did. What ah'm doing, I'se also, doin.

'Course ah'm mighty obliged for yr special interest, reckonin, as ah always have, how special a shootin iron you all carry. But ah jest think, these days, these fine fall huntin days, you ought to wad that thar gun of yrs, and try these newfangled 38 longs they tell me you can get back at the settlement, Brer Wit.

This is just a shot over the shoulder
(look ma, no hands), no mirror either, pa,
just for the hell of it, now, it's frozen,
the sun is, hyar in these woods

BRO CHARLES

P.S.

I had closed this letter, and was walking out to post it, when I did think to take this liberty to tell you, that, I am somewaht disturbed (like *you* say!), have been, since, in yr long letter, you mentioned the WHEEL OF SHEOL as the paradigm of what you want to do next—of the sea-island parable, i suppose.

Now you will know, certainly, that of all yr friends, I shall surely say least of all, you could be wrong. For I say, a man knows best what *he* is up to. Yet of course it is also true i know how what a friend says, is, helpful.

All i wanted to say is, to remind you that, not so long ago—or maybe almost after the WHEEL—you added the passage I speak of (18-21). And that that thread for you to wind unwind yr labyrinth is as good, or better, than SHEOL.

Nor to say don't do both, of course. It is only, that, yr bullwhacking of society (the "world") stings when the ship is tight in yr own hand (when yr own back is under it), most. Or when yr own hand is whipless, utterly open, a palm, for fragrant gesture & love. (I am thinking, now, of that fascinating para, near the beginning of WHEOL, when—you base yr metaphysic in a physiology of the head: this animating of the organs is a precise—precious source of fable, more proper, I take it, to yr singular senses than a lot of "history" which WHEOL also has.

What I am dumpishly going towards, is, that, every sentence in those 4 pages (18-21), is clewed tight to *you*, to yr nature & mystery, the disclosure of same, the conjecture of, by, on same, that, by such a grip, by staying inside your own air so insistent—so intensively, you let any one else all, all, all *their* air

But the world riles you so, you usually, beat the hell out of it, and out of everyone else but yrself.

Yet there is this other gate, through which you enter & demolish the world: and the curious thing is, that it, too, is clewed to you. (I am referring to that paragraph in WHEEL (it is page 100, "the forse's ears" to the "slyest of vanity".)

These two GATES: they can't be beat. BUT, they must dominate, or...

And I'd hazard the guess, that, what joins the, what keeps the air in, is, YOUR SENSES. When the HEAD follows after the SENSES, especially your nose (now I mean in the writing as well as the thinking, in the act of the writing, the control) you are truly imaginative : yr page *invites*.

Let me toss this at you: the physiology of that para, 100, and the geophysical base of another para (102, "Mortal learning...eat and know) are the TRUE CONTRARY of the OTHER METHOD (18-21) and simply because they are the true extension of THE INDIVIDUAL & HIS SENSES, EDWARD DAHLBERG

You prove again, that, no matter how much a man exposes himself, the more, he is, ambiguous. And the less he has to do with the world, the more he exposes SAME.

Okay. I'll shut up. Charles

The abstract (form) versus the generalization (moralizings): for example, how impeccably you disclose yrself abstractly in one rising passage in FLEA (I think the finest you ever wrote, and one of the most moving passages—well, *who* has done, in yr order of literature, such pages as 18 (bottom, Cana's waterpots) to 22 (top, I put a cicada in my vest). Here you are yr poet, and abstract, abstract, diffident, and thus, entirely, by disclosure and conjecture, MORAL.

(And what form, what a form, implicit, in it (the same form which made me, rise to the story, the FLEA, tho, there, so often, yr generalizing, steals, eats away the cheese of, yr form).)

You see, I delay, and study, for, to unwrap you from yourself, is most hard, because, to say what *is* yr order of form, is not at all easy. (Now don't take that as a feather. It is not so. Every line you write shld be—excuse me, it is not at all stiff of me, to say this—abstract, (not personal only in this sense of, the impersonal: yr own sense, of, this, as you say, go, go, and find, in yr forms, your abstractions.

Let me be mischievous also, with the text of yr letter:
I know that work is what we're here for, period, flatly true, not, "the only redemption for Adam and us" (that is what I mean by generalizing the experience or the truth: every allusion, of any sort, historical or otherwise, must *add* to the reach or spread of the gnome, or it eats, instead: to my most christian ears, this only perpetuates all the christian rot, thus diminishing,

instead, as so often you do, increasing the gnome. And why? Because, basically it is a cliche you are pumping: the sweat of adam's brow. And with that comes that desperate notion of original Sin, language is so fullsome, and its its references so wide. Suddenly, instead of yr sentence pushing reality now, it (in this allusion) wearies us with all the filthy pack on the back of all the moral errors Moses started and Paul and the rest of such churchmen have piled on pile

Likewise, thistles & briars: Christ-talk (derogade, bankrupt—but of course I do not mean just such use of Christ as in above passage in Flea, noted, where you have gone in by dahlberg and by him come out with a christ as fresh as this frosty November morning.

((It suddenly strikes me! Who was it, that took his eye and pencil, and swiped olson good, for just such wrong-spreading bibicalisms! Oh, Maitre! Listen to yrself: For in the beginning

NONO olson: you are wrong. It is not here, that edward, errs. As a matter of fact, the irony of this use of the biblicals—"sloth...boredom, ...idleness" is perfect, mockery, & force, fresh.

It is Adam's sweat, or Daniel and the burning furnace, I am calling you on, not, on this or, gehenna doubts, say, where, yr adjective, adds push to the noun, as a matter of fact, saves the noun, from contemporary cliche.

Well, just, that you are so fine I, because I feel so close to you & yr imagination, want you to be, as they say abt sugar, superfine!

Hello, Edward, and best, best, best. You are coming along fine, Maitre! Sd the Pupil!

Ho: CHARLES

[217 Randolph Pl, N.E.]
Washington *Wed Dec 19 51*

My dear Edward:

by god. by god. that is something! (i have just now read it, it having been here for my return—came into my hand an hour ago—and i am tremendously moved.

Here is an act of mnemonics & exactness, all Flaccids & Easies! (And I have no way of knowing whether you knew how particularly I did take offense at this Arvin's robberies. And that you have exposed him on the public thoroughfare—that it shld be you, who only could do it—this is beautiful

It is a beautiful thing, looking at it as though I am only the materials for your wit & corrections

such sentences as, the institute priests are Goya foxes with pens in their paws

knowledge has become an abstruse fact

the perverse is now so dominant evil is often called good

It's polemic as that art is needed to be restored: firm, & inside: inside, both of you and of the texts—that is so very sure, the care with which you have disposed yrself and these texts, the firmness of your management of both—the delicacy—the delicacies

And in that swelling paragraph about the two of us—)which does seem to me the loveliest of it all)—I witness to you that you are exact, exact & magnanimous. (The pain, too, I can also reinforce.)

It is a huge act, Edward, an act of your own size (a size all of us need cultivate ((you see, I suffer under a restraint, that yr last word to me was, Ingrate, the biggest this hyar cuntry might raise

(and i shall

forever suffer under such, from you or anyone, because i was born with the damndest obsession of all, justice, that ugliest virtue, the impossible one

(((I have yet to turn the corner of it, to slip out from these balances, and engage myself, engage myself

So I blush, almost happily blush, with the pleasure & dimensions of your act, so to praise me in the public domain—not to praise (it comes to me so, it is close) but to point thus, and say, look: here is this man's labors, once.

I was full of chagrin these days, peculiarly troubled, bottomwise, and to have this wine poured straight into my hampered blood stream makes me giddier than this strange machine's type & drop. It makes me more dizzy than wild, and you must excuse it if this letter comes out like quiet ravings. For I am to this degree mad, and you have straightened it (straightened it like, say, De Quincey says opium made harmonies where there had only been pains from a wet hair worn straight to bed in a cold night for 21 days!)

Wld you accept, with this a swipe I took, this fall, at some such same monsters? (in fact, arvin is—as you will quickly note—one of the three I was the most after. And surely, from malice,—not so wide & great as riders like yrself who go on apple's back, who are capable of living in the large and enlarging same ((my trial is still particulars!

(((and whether this is what joins to my bitch goddess, justice, i do not yet know—i rather imagine this is the connection, this is the foolish search to use oneself as balance

And what does move me)as I say(in this LAURLES FOR BROOWERS is how firm your own value system is (and certainly arrived at by yr own large way, and its endurancies carried out, carried out, worn for so long

((my friend

Another way: it is just such plain pleasure to see such pigs stuck! God damn them (and again i am wry, with so much you and I have experienced—or, fr yr point of view, you have experienced—better, not experienced—from the likes of, me)

It comes out all wry.

(((One thing, there, is grand—&peculiar: Bill—I
just never cld figure out his story, how much he was
responsible for Van Doren & so, Weaver
In any case,
I take it as a correction (still bitter, that, Bill
could not see me for the Kouwenhovens, of course—which
ate then, and east now, like the whore in Koln,—same
time

((You must excuse all the boners this machine has made—& they seem so significant I leave them, like the black back of the Soapine whale only dutch cleansers can do anything with,—not me, who is neither white nor black, nor knows his best scouring powder
Signed, Schliemeihl))

Crazy, nobong, bongo: by god, i say, to be there, in the public print, put there by you so tellingly: thank you, Edward, for the long arm of your mind & its attentions!

For I feel also this that what makes it so large an act, is, that I am materials—I am used for others, that, others may also be misused, eh? For surely these must always be fought, must be struck.

And yr distinction is, that you have stuck em in our time as that like man & yr hero Poe did his work (Melville, like myself, are such who make it all in the margins of their minds, & are too reluctant to be of public good
no, I cannot so enlarge myself—strike it off.
Leave it, simply, I do not do as well.

With old & new love, & new thanks
that you are more alert than others

yr
OLSON

[39½ Washington Square, So.
New York, New York]
December 31, 1951

My dear Charles:

I telephoned you from Florida. A former student of mine took R'lene and me to Sarasota. The piece for the Freeman was two months labor and vexation, One glance at the sodomite book was enough, but to nail him on a thieves' cross at Calvary was another matter. It is done, and now your work cannot be gainsaid or garbled or pilfered. i took pains to see that no less than twenty copies went to Smith College. I know the little academic gnome was bitterly stung; everybody who has read it has said that there was no doubt that I proved that he was a robber. Charles Angoff was very taken with the piece, and so was James Rorty. Well, can you believe any more that the American writer is not some Gadarene devil? But the fight, who else has bothered but me? I have had a years' battle against Mark Van Doren, the canary Trilling up at Columbia, the albino Fitzgerald beadles, the herd academic deacons of grammar, and for what purpose? If a few would use a pen as a whip they would go their riggish kennels, but no one will help me.

Now there is the bitter iron agony of bread. Remember, you wrote me that I practice virtues for sums; if so, then I had better seek me a vice. Now, how about your Pound and Williams. Is your nose rough enough for the swill autobiography? He is for himself, pater pediatrician Williams, that's the great infamy in the Cyclopes of Euripides.

I write you a little this time, Charles, but do not believe this reply is meant to be low-hearted. I wish you would do one thing, go back over the scroll of your life as a writer, and ask your own heart whether anybody had ever been so steadfast to your nature as one Edward Dahlberg, and ask what he has reaped in return, save the only knowledge that keeps him alive, and that he has always tried to tell the truth which people nowadays miscall by the name of slander and malice. Granville Hicks wrote in a letter to Chamberlian at the Freeman, saying that he should not print Edward Dahlberg, for he was vicious and sick and that the so-called stealths from your book were coincidental, fine word, coincidental, it is so useful and marginal another word for sneaking.

Well, I too send you my love and friendship; if you know of any college that would like a composition handyman around, let me know.

EDWARD DAHLBERG

[Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, N.C.]
January 22 [, 1952]

My dear Edward:

A man shld show an enormous reluctance to making metaphors out of other men's facts—if one's own are not enough,—or if one's own are only the subjects of one's own sentimentalities—or dedications, then, maybe one would have to extend oneself, and start turning other's children into whales, or equally sleazy parodies

—how peculiarly you outrage another, and how repeatedly it is by way of the things intimate to them:

how gross this is, you, who wails whenever anything is directed home to yrself, one wld think you wld

know. But patently you don't—patently, you do do not know that the injuries practiced on you are the injuries you practice:

so you find fit company, find yrself now tallying such creatures as Mumford Angoff & who else

and don't say it is because the company of your naturals is refused you: you refuse yrself their love, & interest, by outrages or rigidities

you shld be so heavy as to be so jocular to a boy like Hedden, making metaphors & mock of me, mine, to such a public person, in such a public way:

it doesn't matter, simply, that, you do it, do not feel these immaculatenesses: yes, i'll take the word & wear it, for they are as much my cloth as the same things you have chosen to praise in my one work you do praise, in public(&, surely, as i know, in private)

i stand on my thanks to you, for the LAURELS—yet i stayed silent to yr letter from Florida (rec(d last week), simply because i do not know what to do when you count coups

the trouble is, i know & grant you the reasons of yr demarches: i know the same craving for engagement of one's force. Yet this is the double gate which won't go down. And you know the obstruction.

My sense is, you think the gate is to be tumbled, reared or outraged away.

I think it is what we are.

It is such a welter, these businesses between us. My silences (which you paw at) are solely I do not know what to do when the skin is the gate, when you put your amour prepre on your sleeve—as though mine too were worn there. It ain't.

I made this prayer, today: that you

would wear your troubles once again as Lorrie Lewis hath, instead of thinking they could be thrust out on any other body, the society, a friend, a love, any place but where they are, where any of us has em.

I don't believe in wisdoms. Ultimately, they, too, are slogans—and for this reason, that, staying with one's own particulars, one inhabits, and discloses, all there is to disclose. The sufferings are not to be put off, like an environment. They are not caused.

I believe in laws—and one of them, surely, is, that each man does know the state of his own soul. And whose is wise—that is, wise enough to get to the other side of despair? The humpty-dumpty of it is each man's: & one either knows & deals with that—one has respect for one's own life—or one doesn't.

I regret to sound like a toothed portcullis. I am not. Yet you do such things you make me so, to keep what I hath.

CHARLES

[Nimbus Letterhead] Nimbus
The Westminster Press . 411a Harrow Road . London W9
Publisher John Trafford
Editors Tristram Hull.Ivo Jarosy
Business Manager John Scott
[no date]

Dear Charles,—

Do you have any prose or verse you might care to submit. I heard you had done a small treatise on the Donner Tragedy; maybe that might be suitable, as we could reprint it in England. You might have some other work on the early American narratives you are doing. We want something strong. The pay is not very much, a guinea for a

thousand words of prose, and something more for verse. Nimbus has a circulation of about two thousand readers that should entice a writer. We are not interested in publishing well-known nonentities. You may know of some other gifted person. Any suggestions you care to make will be a help. I hope we can serve poets and talented natures, and I shan't mind running after a rare obscurian.

EDWARD DAHLBERG

Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina
[no date—November, 1954]

My Dear Ed:

Your letter, & Nimbus, both in, and deepest thanks for asking me to submit something, as well that I hear from you. (At the time Creeley was starting to edit the Black Mt Review I heard, through Sauer, that you were around there, and asked him to ask you if you cared to send something to Creeley. I repeat. And his address is:

Robt Creeley
Casa Martina
Bononova, Palma
Mallorca, Spain

...

Issue #3 is just in air mail from Mallorca (where we get printing of 750 with 64 pages for less than 250 bucks).

I shall enclose at least a poem (*David Ingram*, one of the Maximus "Letters"). And if anything of a present book on Shakespeare—just now stumbling—should seem usable, I shall also send it. (Such narratives as you speak of are either absorbed in the Maximus, or still shoot out in reviews, rather than in any use from myself, I mean with my own spit put on it).

It's great to submit them to you, but I despair of Nimbus using them, unless you work a change there. I have read this issue (and noted the contributors to earlier ones), and, except for the Eluard poem, take it there is a confusion of the simple with the obvious (or, the obvious with the simple, whichever way it reads right). And a real miss on what is "Old-fashioned". —I guess you are there, and think of me as of it, because there are currents in the position which make sense, viz—the fact of the piece on beans, as well that Jung... as well this import of the simple, and the old, in both verse & prose attack & form. But really, Ed! All here is soft, and I mean easy

the whole problem of the art of artifice, of the restoration of the six other sorts of song (instead of the stupid lyric), the heart of affection, the rediscovery of Afghanistan: not Barker, Whiting, MacDiarmid, that rotten Cocteau.

Christ, I shld bother you with this! You change it. And I can suggest, in addition to Creeley, three others you might care to ask:

Irving Layton 8035 Kildare Avenue Cote St Luc, Quebec	verse
Robt Hellman Writing Workshop Univ of Iowa Iowa City, Iowa	stories
Larry Eigner 23 Bates Road Swampscott, Mass	both

(over)

And two others, Robt Duncan, whom you probably know (address: 1724 Baker Street, San Francisco) whom I am "soft" about; and funny

open if inefficient verse maker Raymond Souster, 28 Mayfield Avenue, Toronto 3, Ontario, Canada.

(None of these, by the way, with the exception of Creeley, are that conscious of what is going on, but each of them is quite clean about how he does his own thing. And Layton, I'd say, is the *one* classical English poet alive, a cross of Donne & Blake, & driving rhyme and metric straight out from now. Makes the *Nine* gang, & this splinter group Nimbus is—with the old exception of Ian Fletcher, was it (in Nine), that most gifted user of the old discourse system? Ian somebody, who, at last sight, was all done, was diddling with Maryolatry (like you'd say!), or making exercise books out of Medieval pictures!

Ok. Excuse me. It's just that the "republic of letters" ...And the English, in London, strike me as such journalists, as "arriviste" (whatever that means!—i mean, late-comers...

Pick me this way: like Lawrence said, the Americans were extreme in 1850! Now they are post-same. Which is one hell of a way farther along the road than re-action. And discourse has moved so far off that base of the explicit, without, by now, being anything but sharply straight

what do those boys think it all is, a either-or? all epater Pound, Eliot, Empson, back to academicism like Bonamy Dobree (who once was of use on one of those English "centuries"

The crossing of what's been done with what was done in order to do what now patently has to be done—it's a matter of feathers and steel, not one or the odor

La-la! Just a pleasure to write ot you. Will shut up, and go about my business, at least copy you the Ingram. And let me know the worst:

surely the title of your sheet is "a cloud, as of romance, about a

person or thing" (at least that's what I'm saying isn't so easy, and why I wish I had this job on Shakespeare's late verse & therefore dramaturgy ready to send you, for it would be a fair test run of Jarosy:

romance,
aint easy,
Jarosy
the cloud
ain't rosy,
it is
"uniformly gray and extending
over the entire sky (hey!
JAROSY, calling Herrr Professor Doktor
JAROSY, Drop that
nimbus
All love, CHARLES O

PS [in script on top margin of first page] Robt's letter just in—so will fire this to get us on And get to the poem soon. CRAZY the *Wheel!*

November 24, 1954

Dear Charles,—

Your letter just came, and Creeley whom I like very much should be here in about an hour and a half. The plain truth is, Charles, that I never read Nimbus. I told the two editors it was bad without looking at it. However, I said, if they would let me print real people in strength I would act as editor for America. I told them I was not interested in a magazine that was no more than a torid anthology, a piddling verse or two by one man, a short story by another, then an essay on Eliot, Pound, Tate or Lionel Cacary Trilling. Well, I don't know how far they will let me go, but if I can't go all the way, I won't waste my time.

I sent out letters at once, not to every celebrated nonentity in the States, but to people who try as best they can to call A A, a chair a chair, an alley an alley.

Thanks, too, Charles, for suggesting names; everybody except, the knaves of letters, seem to get printed, and those who are having great difficulties, and are in one way or another in limbo, are hard to reach.

I got a fine letter from Josephine Herbst. She can't get a passport to Europe, and asked me whether I would run as essay on her hardships with the state department. I wrote her at once to go ahead with it, only beseeching her to employ early colonial references to show that from the start America was a refuge of bigots, like that scurrilous author of the *Simple Cobbler of Aggawam.*

How, I am very anxious to get the Shakespeare essay; send the poem or verses too, and if they are as good as you are, you know it will be my delight to print them.

I stayed three days in Paris, and after meeting several fornication proseman, I quit. It was, besides, very expensive solitude.

Of course, Jarosy has no sense; actually you know more about him than I do. I met him three times, enough to tell him he knew nothing, and wondering how long he was going to pursue it.

Don't worry about the length of the Shakespeare essay; if it's very good, and it ought to be, the longer the better. Besides, we will be able to get some pounds into your pocket.

Don't despair; if I care for the Shakespeare essay, and there is any objection, I'll quit. You know how changeless man is. I am always the same, only more of it.

At this moment, I shall also write to Tristram Hull; he is the son of the Jung translator; he is half*jew, the english in him you can throw away; he is by no means unintelligent, but maybe too shrewd to have a development. Actually, there is also David Wright, an English poet from South Africa who is also an associate editor. He is a charming weakling, not without talent, but I don't write to anybody but Hull.

After finishing a book which Laughlin says he will do, I found I had two books, and so I may have to expand one, and use the other,

on the New World, for another volume.

Nimbus has a long piece by me in the forthcoming issue, on Brazil, Peru, the rivers, which are our veins and myths, in South America.

If Hull will go along with me, we can somehow or other be a small, compact group, and I'll print ten poems by one versifier in an issue, and not one, so that a reader has a sense of the nature and the physiognomy of the man.

I move, Charles, from the ancients to the New Continent. I don't know how long I shall stay here, the usual flaneurs of the Muses at Palma and Robert Graves who writes for Punch and Jesus.

I read your letter fast, and will have to reread it, but I wanted to get a reply to you quickly, and also to Hull. Even if I go back to America, which I don't want to do, but wherever you go you walk around by yourself, and I am a dirty fragment by myself, I'll still be the American editor.

Meantime, my dear Charles, let me hear from you soon. You have my love and friendship, and if I can get you printed I am not altogether vile dust.

EDWARD

I'm giving you Cook's as an address, for I may move—

ED.

December 28, 1954

Dear Charles:—

I wrote to you in reply to your good letter. I fear, however, that my own words were lifeless, and hardly a savory answer to your epistle. But do not think you have not been in my mind. Now, I found that young Hull was quite rapacious, and that he was far more interested in owning a magazine than in bringing out a strong a truth. I did not say anything about your kind invitation to appear in the Black

Mountain periodical. For one thing, I forgot, and then I have other feelings, which I hope you will understand. We are the lost people of the arts in America. What good will it do us to print our work in a very small clandestine magazine which we have to hand about to indifferent persons to get it read altogether. If you give the mediocre nonentity, (and there are many sensitive, empty people in the world), a book for nothing, he does not read it. He only prizes what he buys, for that is almost the sole recreation in the States. So that by giving a book to a nobody you deprive him of amusement, and he detests you for it. Then what is the average magazine? a laodicean anthology containing one poem, a short story, an essay attacking Eliot or praising Pound. Were there a way of printing a vision, and printing a writer in strength, that would be different. It is necessary to get three or four gifted people together, and they have to have literary scholarship, by which I mean nothing academic. I abhor the subhuman professor of letters.

But to return to your Shakespeare essay. I had been contributing to Poetry for over three years. I don't have to tell you that it is pansy punctuation verse. Shapiro had taken a long poem of mine, *The Garment of RA*, and then rejected it because it was gnomic and not dramatic! Anyway, I saw him in Chicago. I had had a long altercation with him, telling him I did not care to appear in Poetry. We were quite friendly when I saw him, and I talked about your piece on Shakespeare. He said he had heard of it, and that it was to long. I ridiculed him by telling him that he was always refusing good work because it was too short or too wide, or too broad, or that the sleeves of the chapters or stanzas bulged, insisting that he take a real interest in your Shakespeare. Now, he is leaving Poetry in a very short time, going to teach at Berkeley. The plan is this, if it is agreeable to you: please send the Shakespeare essay to me, even if it is not done. He won't publish all of it anyway. Let me, if you will, make suggestions, and then if it has the alchemic ore that I suspect it has, mail it to Shapiro with my own feelings. If we do this, I believe we have a good chance of getting some portion of it printed. I shall do my very best

for you as you, know, though you have been irked with me in the past, and imagine, for what reasons, I know not, that I have ever had any base motives in doing something for you. That there is abundant affection between us we should both know, and that in some way we are unalterable kin our very intellectual travels amply indicate. You are remarkable as speculative granite or water; you are yourself one of the elements of the Cosmos. You can do nothing that is secret from my own identity. Without knowledge of your own purposes or reading I have been reading the Quiche Maya Scripture and diverse other works on the Incas, the Chichimecas. I took but a quick glance at the MAYAN LETTERS and smiled.

There is one other matter: once I said that literature is a gospel of love, and you took it to mean that I expected you because we are friends to care for everything I wrote. You must be just, Charles; in all the years I have known you, and labored for your gifts, I only once asked you to defend a book of mine, and one which you had already lauded. Whatever my defects are, I am not Waldo frank; I write the best I can, and do not think I am modest, unambitious. I am droll rather than virtuous, and the only reason that I do not make stupid or gross compromises is that I do not know how. I am not in the habit of it, and would only be a greater simpleton than I am were I to try.

I have a book done which Laughlin is supposed to do. He has had the MS for sixteen months, and he won't give me a contract. He is looking about for an artist to do drawings. He says the book will be a commercial disaster and so he has to get a well-known artist, to attract people to look at the drawings and pay no heed to the writing. Should he publish it the artist will do very well and gain more lookers; for this is a picture book century, and the most vacuous people look at paintings because they are too indolent to read.

Laughlin has had a long poem of mine for 2 years for the Annual which now comes out every three years.

What are we to do? Greed and absolute hatred of the mind have eaten up all values. You can alter the state, but not the customs of the people, so politics is not the solution. Everybody on all sides is killing

the grass, the rivers, the poems, and demolishing a grange and putting up in its place the garage. No screed will be of help; the sickness is very deep, and the wheel is in the head.

My dear Charles, let me hear from you quickly, and I shall do my very best. Maybe, you have some suggestions. You know how predatory Williams is. We have to form some small cohesive group or each die on top apart.

You have my love and friendship.

EDWARD

Edward Dahlberg
General Delivery
Santa Monica, California
Mail comes to the apartment about two in the afternoon, and for that reason I use general delivery.

[Santa Monica, California]
August 20, 1955

Dear Charles: —

I am starting a small press, and am bringing out a book of verse and prose of no more than six to eight writers. I am not interested in anthologies, a poem of six lines by one versifier, a short tale by another, then an essay, all not making a vision, or a truth, giving you perhaps no more than the chaps of one author, knees of another, the jowls of a third.

What happened to the Shakespeare essay? I had hoped to make a magazine of strength of Nimbus. But I cannot do anything with punctuation pathics, rabble aesthetes, and the self-loving Ham of modern letters. You know my experience with Dorothy Norman on TWICE A YEAR, and that for all my labors I could scarce rake out some moiety of the dung of the Augean stables. I had no profit whatsoever from my labors except the publication of Lear and MOBY-

DICK. The rest was stubble and hyssop, and I have eaten and drunk both until I reel at Gethsemane which is thinking, feeling, and writing, well, badly, and not at all. What boots it all, and does the Kosmos care one jot one the other, and it may be that our cadavers are of more worth to the energy of the Universe than all our scribblings.

I have only looked into the MAYAN LETTERS, but intend shortly to read them. Herbert Read and I are contemplating a book together on modern literature. I shall, I pray, be Vulcan's Fire in this, but what with the conclusion of a book, I am now wasted and charred, and this may be a huge brag. But I will try again.

I expect to print some work by Read in this first book. I have already placed an advertisement in the papers, and expect to run notice of the press elsewhere.

It has been my intention to write to Bob Creeley; but again I was glutted with such inertia that to lift my arm some mornings was the burden of Sisyphus, nor have I been able to reach those fruits of Erebus (where else are they, since I cannot find them in the sun), denied to Tantalus.

You may have some suggestions. I hope through Read to have some distribution in London as well as in the United States. The purpose is to bring out work unacceptable to venal publishers, are there any others, a query of the buffoon.

I was appalled to hear that Ann Rita had written to you in my behalf. When I want to relate myself to you in some way or other, and all cleavages between persons is Cain and murder and injustice, I shall do it myself, as I am now doing. I require no vicar either for my gall, or adders, or affections.

You are a part of my memory and experiences, and I can brew nothing in that poor limbeck called the heart, without in some way including you, nor can you do otherwise. There is no gimcrack pride, or Hubris, as the fraudulent academic names it, proving their crudity to the illiterates of Mt. Ida, which stinks worse today than the brackish waters of Styx, between friends. I can throw a woman away, and be

glad to rid myself of this tribe of sots and sins, and look for other Poppaeas to ransack my pores and dreams, but not a friend. Well, let it be as I have said; nothing can be changed.

I should tell you my own relations with Shapiro on poetry was a battle of the books for three years. I could not stomach the empurpled pathics of verse he printed; I never read the magazines to which I contribute; I know better ways to go to bedlam. If I finally was driven by the dingiest political dunciads to do a column for the foetid New Freeman, I had to appear somewhere, for I grow weary of putting all my work away for rust and moths and epitaphs. Let those who have lied about me know, that one who is not a marxist is not for that simple reason a blackguard, a vassal and ninny of the state. I have published five different articles on Randoph Bourne, but those on the left are as pusilanimous as those on the right. No one will gather up the words and the glyphs form the papyrus and the dust of the sepulchre.

I send you my love, for I have nothing to hoard.
EDWARD

Edward Dahlberg
General Delivery
Santa Monica, California

[in pencil script]

Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, N.C.]
Wed Oct 19/ 55

My dear Ed

It comes out this way: what is *your* experience of these things, *any* of them, the slightest(the *nasal* [?] I know is keen, & always heard; the Carmine Street stable or the Rockport fields)—or the largest (say, Indians *you don't know*

And because I don't hear you registering your queer images peculiar dry done thing—because I miss the labor—

(and get, instead, these arrogations—which, I take it, have to happen if the scrupulous isn't: you must forgive me my most impolite failure to answer your letter

(my last letter to you some years ago was intercepted by your wife, from whom I received a pious screed in return)

Experience is, said it, a lot more g[ ]h & unknown to the best of us, than such phrasing & dicta as you

(& so often *generously* give:

you

are *generous*, Ed, that's not at all where you ought to suffer anything I say or do, I am not really I ain't the most ingrate in American letters I aint in "American letters." That's it. That's what I'm talking about. I'm incapable of a *literary relation.*

I can only hear the quietest things—or at least only care for them. And I seem to find you address me in a voice *too big*. I think that may be fine. In fact, I read everything you write—either to me, or that I see published. That I don't answer—don't make anything of it other than this explanation.

Or attempt at same: that to undo what you yourself don't do takes more than I've got to give. I don't like war between men. Or even share in it.

So please forgive me.
(Excuse pencil.
Suddenly felt able to say this. And have.)

CHARLES

[Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina]
November 12, 1955

Look, Ed:

This "portrait" of Olson to Creeley is exactly what I mean, and more of same (as previously to Hedden some form of abuse of Ann Rita, etc): leave me out of it, dig your nose into what *I do* (not am) but if you have a right to talk about me—and surely you have—make sure it's me. I repeat: to undo what you don't do is what makes you impossible. And several times outrageous.

I say this impersonally, and would reach it over to you (as my previous note sought to). but I throw up my hands at any chance you'll "hear it" when you take the easy way out and call it incoherent. And something else. As one said: he can't hear you if he don't hear hisself. And how.

I don't give a damn. But I do when you intrude via persons and details which are a part of another man's paradox of experience. Or rather: the "right" to use another man's details depends upon a formal virtue you won't practice; or a fluency I don't find your "portraits" earn. One or the other. And at heart form, and some actuality are both what any of us who are really busy are involved with at this point of the 20th century.

And I would write to you about these matters, to take this occasion to prepare for any examination of you in print which occasion may present. I think you play hob with too many important things in this letter to Creeley to make it any longer excusable to go by it. It was what I meant by not understanding a "literary" relationship. It belongs in print, brother. Let's go there. I believe you ought to, instead of this back-of-my-back traffic. Dig the work, and say what you will; but leave my fate to me. It's that intrusion, that back-stairs

chattering...

For example, your concept of a person: it is taxonomic, and retrograde at a time when context and relevance—motion—is palpably the advantage, and the care, not relationships. You think you can pin me up? But have you asked yourself first questions about the physiology and the psychology of Edward Dahlberg?

Have you?

In any case, I am not a specimen. Or is any man. His quandary is more examinable. And a dumpheap—man's dumpheaps—are more relevant than you seem to wish or dare nasally to allow. A man picks his way, he doesn't launch phrases—or rather, in your case, adjectives and sentences. You don't slam a cortex on a coelenterate and get a sentence, Mister Prose Man. And yet just such sentences are what you make so much of. —Brother, be less memorable! having looked at a basic-basic!

My beef here is our slamming around about vernacular—my "abstract" vernacular, Pound's "glacial"—and who else's what vernacular (?) What's your fear, Mister Man?

Obviously it isn't. It's that you have misled yourself about the nature of language: you think it's vocabulary. The rest of us guess it's for real.

You think it's words. The rest of [us] think it's force. thus you are drawn up into the head (?) (and talk so much of the viscera?) Again, I burn that you should propose some slackening of my intelligence due to some Marxian ghost which leads me to seek commerce with the peeple ???? wot People???

Baloney, Dahlberg. Look at it. Rub your nose in it. Find out. Take a look. Lend an ear. Give it a once over—*it*, not you. Try it on, for size.

It's so dull, these prepared fixatives you reach up for to dip the latest in: i think it's you, really, Ed, who ought to ask himself what ambient "laws" you are suffering from, out of the last century—

and don't cry
back the mire of veins, or whatever, prurience of any man, etc.: that's what I mean, the Weltschmerz, or whatever Oyrapeenische concept of fate etc

Look. I dont' mean to be a drab. Honest I don't. Cross my heart and all that vernacular. But, you know—your counters are such one can only do two things, let em go. Or bite back. And either doesn't lead to much gain. You are too intelligent. But not serious enough. The idea, that you should talk about the "serious" people, an what they say about Olson. Wow. How they miss my Swiss who wrote Ish-swish-o, and what a moral disapointment serious people feel...

Blah blah

reawlly, ewward

It's just too damn bad

I can't take you seriously [added in script] (I can—2½ pages: see later on in letter)

For another example, Indians (he repeated—my lawd, Sahagun! (I just won't be able to write it, to write the exegesis and examination a putting of the clock back to Lord Kingsborough at least, ought to get, in the public domain, so that....

do you understand what *damage* that Nimbus piece on Indians *does* duz duz duz ?

Stand up, Edward, and let's take some shots at you, you great big white man you

Retrograde: no wonder you yell the young, you say (I'm glad to hear!) read me. By god, am I please.

Let me try to be serious. Otherwise, this only is no good. There are two prongs for any man of intelligence who reads to write (so far as I know there are you and Pound and me, who else?)

OK. (The others have better sense. Bill, e.g., And Creeley, say).

But if you are fool-

ish (and so am I) the double prong is scholarship and vernacular, that combo. And solely for one reason:

the discrete, and the continuous.

Now I'll be damned that I can see that you are discrete, either way, either in hearing yourself or what certainly establishes continuity—others.

Ach: I'll rush to conclusion. It's appetitive words versus language as precise. You should ask yourself if a sentence is a complete [thought]. If so, there ought to be fewer. Otherwise, is a sentence?

I leave you in my coherence.

And do leave it—to me. You got your own troubles. The last thing I want to do is add to them. And I regret, I can't relieve them—but isn't that the whole thing, that we can't

So we give each other something else.

OK. I'll sign off.

Yrs, with no offence intended. On the contrary

Olson

You really murder me, Ed—of course I'd try to break the tablets of Choreb if you came down with them off the mountain, you Moses you, you old Moses. My god the last thing we need is more of those ritual formularies of dead peoples—you'll be taken up by this newest religious floating, (you watch out, you'll get that canonization now that the English milker of anything, that friend of yours, is a knight, is't it?)

You're so foolish, not to come down off the mountain and figure that some of us can be concerned without wanting a large stiff language of stones, and self-canonization. —And that just me, and I'm sure some others, can hear you when you talk sense, as you do in those last two

columns and a half in Nimbus on La Salle. — Or me only that hapless friend of yours, Charles Olson, is a luminous reader enough to feel rewarded by those columns for having undone all the glutted sentences from page 38 to that point—and capable of knowing that those two columns and a half are worth calling to anybody's attention (like he fought his way through the mss of BONES and set some order there—like he was the first who tried to publish SODOM, here, with Nick Cernovich— —you ingrate, you!)

It's absurd: i thank you and I'll tell anybody read Dahlberg on La Salle and the French to see the only drawing of a picture of the condition of the white man as he entered the condition of the North American continent

and there's a thickness to this seizing which I'm too sensitive not to see you have accomplished—had to accomplish—all by that *wrong* loaded weighing of Indians versus Jews-Greeks-Egyptians, and, in two instances, Europeans, in the previous 9 pages BUT

are we or are we not in a free and paradoxical enough *passage* for such a discrimination to be made, and to be used????

> I mean, can you see that you do load the continent as Indian versus man as ancient, and wrong the former by scoriation—man with him—; and wrong the latter by sentimentality about how human life was then??
>
> don't you see how it is your own *selection*, which loads, and weighs in so that there's a cancellation, both the Aztec-Inca people (all you do use of the Indian), and a selection of the ancient which is as stereo as just those "classical" people, and not any others—and not even them in their density???

To hell with that. That is, I don't hope to argue you. Nor do I care, just because if you have to do it that way, its ok with me if, finally,

you give me this La Salle passage

—plus, by the way, the little lovely undone moment of the humans and the saurians each on a side trying to rifle the tortoise of either his eggs or his flesh on one of those South American rivers.

(If it's ok with me, I don't think it follows that it's—or ought to be—ok with Edward Dahlberg. He, too, shares responsibility for the government of words and the exercise of the forms of language. And if they aren't in his care, then there is loss the rest of us feel

It's crazy how, in those two columns and a half, suddenly because you are *claiming* anything (what burns me up about the way you write letters about me to others, or, for that matter, to myself—claiming fate....which is also what you are doing about both the Indians and the Ancients from page 38 to that point, page 47)—suddenly that deadly scale (which cancels everything, and immobilizes your sentences—makes them stones

—god's arm is a stone separating the sheeps from the gooks—)

thank god suddenly that scale is down and dimensions of actuality return, the time is not a fraudulent copulative present but *the* time that North America (note, specifically, *North* America, the actual America you know, Lorrie Dahlia and Edward Dahlberg) N. America was a new place—to a white man, mind you, and specifically a Northern European white man (a Frenchman, or, John Smith—even you throw De Soto and Cortes into a Florida sphere);

and space, that is, that precise but limited moment of space, when the land was unpeopled and pussley hadn't yet started to come back from San Francisco where it had been carried by the earliest Spanish ships—and from, interestingly enough, Phoenicia (pussley is a Semitic plant!)

well in that thickness, for the first time, what I think you must take to be your Cherubic (pardon, I mean, Chorebic) truths, work:

viz, who the hell has said anything as good on a crucical involvement of any one of us right now and you, via La Salle, that

CHARACTER, FREE WILL AND DESTINY ARE THE SAME

Put that on stone.

and 2nd: NEED IS A GOD WILL GIVE MAN SOMETHING TOILING WITH CHANCE

That will make a hieroglyph too

These are apothegms a man of the present can use. To me your question has to be, that all the others—I count 23—from page 38 to 47—don't. That's loss.

And I damn well think that the young, or your ungrateful friends, will know that loss. I won't myself, for one, let them miss, however, the last two columns and a half—he said, boastfully —ah. boastful man

Oh Ed, really, in our vulgar speech, come off it

and glad to have had these
words with you!

ta - ta

CHARLES

[P.O. Box 138
Santa Monica, California]
November 16, 1955

Dear Charles:

Thanks very much for your remarks about the La Salle and also for your prodigal misgivings regarding the other parts of that segment in

Nimbus. I am not a maudline primitive as you think. [sentence underlined by Olson, with penciled comment: "What, possibly, could lead him to think I think this?"] Moreover, I do not claim to know the Indian. I imagine Sahagun knew more about him than you or I. Again, many of the monks did not profess to perceive the Indian. Diego de Landa is concerned with ritual, and that is my principal involvement. All this extra-human knowledge of other people seems to me very sentimental. What I want to do is go to Beginnings. It is preposterous to believe tht Quetzalcoatl is not in part Phoenician, Basque, or a Syrian Atlas. Do I know? No.

I have found great fault with your vernacular because I do not believe it nourishes either the faculties or the fingers, the foot, the arm, or the belly. I thought your poem in the Black Mountain Review disgraceful. Why you throw off somethng of that sort I cannot tell, except that you must have some wanton appetite to *shit* upon yourself. Now, your reference to my responsibility for the government of words is extremely good. I have such a burden, and do not pretend that I can always fulfull it. How often I fail I do not know either.

As you know, and I, my work always requires excisions; I should be grateful to you if you would tell me, in a way that will lead me to particular transgressions of this kind, what sentences you find either bad, or worthless, or overburdened. Some other writers, who have seen the entire MS. feel quite differently from you. That I hardly offer as a reasonable claim for their value. Anyway, as always, I find nothing so hard as to write one good sentence. How much skill can one ever acquire. If you write very plainly you may be empty, or if you take hazards that I do, foolish, bathetic, tumid. Longinus is far more satisfied with those writers who take great chances than with those who avoid all risks.

Since I had a great deal to do with your beginnings as an author I am naturally concerned with your own intellect. What I said to Creeley is the truth; you may not like it, and neither do I. When I became the friend of a remarkable young obscurian and did all within my powers to teach him to be a writer, I had no thought that I would

ever call upon you to defend my work. As I did so only on one occasion, and since you refused, giving me sophisms instead of plain human answers, I had cause to name you a huge ingrate. I had given you lavish homage in two books only to receive in return perversity, and a great reluctance to protect the man who had been your buckler for many years. Were the book bad, and had it for that cause brought embarrassment to you, then that would have been a difficulty you could not expel. But on the contrary, you had written me numerous letters about it, giving me exceptional credit for many many pages. How was I to understand that. Yes, I accused you as a marxist of betraying me, and shooting my book to death, as so many of that infernal sect have done. I had fallen into infamy among these mad laborites of Union Square, and they had persecuted me, had seen to it that no book of mine would be reviewed, had offered free legal aid to my former wife, and you stood by, and observed the spectacle, pretending that what I wanted was to be in the big business of literature. I never will, Charles; I kindle too many antagonisms for my literary and human beliefs. As for being old Moses on the mountain, I care not a straw for such foolish talk. I am too often on the ground; either when I study, or write, or after I have finished a book, or a poem, not knowing whether it is good or bad. One of the most crass and unlearned books I have ever read is Pound's Guide to Kulchur. Now I lament that sort of street barbarism. I don't go to a book to find out what I already know. I know more about the language of gamin than you, and if you doubt it, read your butchered syntax, which you imagine is the speech of the people, and then go to Bottom Dogs. But do not think I am speaking boastfully of that novel. I will take Piers Ploughman or Chaucer for my speech, because I don't think that the scrabbled gutterals of an auto mechanic are as savory or have the same moral or human weight as the words of a rustic or any bumpkin living before the machine, the cartel, and the big inhuman cities came as the black angel to every nation.

The desire to degrade music, sounds, English, rites, art is a scatological one. I believe you share in this malady. You may deny it, and I

have no particular joy in charging you with it, but it is your burden. I don't think you are serious enough in the Mayan LETTERS. I think all those prattling references to Connie which are all right in your familial household but of no worth to a reader or to your line, are self-spoliation. Now, I have not by any means read the book, but intend to; I saw some fine speculative ore in passages here and there, and then that fossilized jargon which Pound so fatuously uses. He knows even less about the streets than you do.

Yes, I go back to Babylon, Egypt, to the Indus, always searching for the beginnings; it will bring me much woe, and maybe, mutilate sentences. At times, I look at an improper adjective and expire in a blush. I have said many times that the writer cannot be wildly alone, and not make mistakes that a simple proof-reader could correct. The trouble is we don't even have the proof-readers any more. What with the dying out of artisanship the sentence is ill-made or amateurish.

I don't care for literary relations. I am a friend or I don't bother with people, and that includes you. You take on airs telling the man who reared you as a writer about having an artistic correspondence with him. That's all right for pederasts and self-seekers, but not for me. I still think, which is quite naive when I do it, but realistic when you do so, that we write books to create a polity grounded in affection. I am a portable tomb out here, and I don't need your epistles, often half-crazy, and on occasion shot through with some burning truth, to kindle the cold hearth in my soul. If I brought you into the world to be a writer now to prate to me about literary relationship, then I committed another grievous error. When you needed me, I did not say to you, you are ambitious, vain, self-loving and turn my back upon your petition. No, I said to you, Charles, you are fancy, precious, a peevish Narcissus, but I will help you. This difference between us makes for literature; you imagine you are coming down to the multitude by your use of jargon which they know better than you. I am not so pretentious or mad. You feign to write for yourself alone; I say simply, but forlornly, I write, and I am alone.

You imagine that being gross is an assertion of your vitality; my

reply is that it is gross to accept a kindness from a man who has been your friend for so many years without even troubling to write him even a few words of thanks. I see, you hanker after friends, too, but the young are your fancy, because they cannot find out your faults as readily as I can. It is my duty to be of help to any gifted man in this terrible voiceless wilderness. Don't make a mistake about me. I'm not on my way toward that ugliest of all bournes, success. I fly from that word as I do from styx, perfidy, the lust of money, and from those who pretend that they have been friends when they have been enemies. You have been my enemy, Charles, all the while that I was your friend. In your earliest days you could not bear to have me say something true before you had said it. I had warned you about that. It may be that there is genuine understanding of flaws in what I write about the Indian. I do not know; but I think there is the same fligitious jealousy. We are always happening upon the same material, together or apart, the loadstone draws us.

I don't think, either you have to be a marxist or a political blackguard. Again, as I told Bob, your friend, and I want you to understand here, that if necessary, I shall leave off writing to him, if that interferes with your literary relationship with him? I should, myself, rather call it friendship for I think that is a much more wonderful word for it.

I don't think you have much self-knowledge. When I suffer from the pangs of solitude I do not say what I need is a literary or an artistic connection. I say I should like very much to talk to a man who cares for conversation.

Let me ask you, and can you reply truthfully, and without evasion, why did you refuse to defend THE FLEA OF SODOM? Do you believe that after your bitterness over the mistreatment of CALL ME ISHMAEL, and my own generous words about it in my book, that your disavowel was just, decent, or friendly. Was it not the act of a foe, perhaps a man who did not know it, or might have been horrified had he realized it. As a result of the interment of my books which goes back as far as 1940 I have known all the hurts by the river

Cocytus. What bread, little as it is, was stolen from me by those assassin book-Cains, the communists, and with your help! You can't deny it, because your acts prove it. You were always furtive with me, and I was always open with [you?]. You could not tell me you were a marxist, as though that would have mattered to me, had you been my steadfast friend. Yes, I have known all the hells of ostracism, but don't think I shall be dormant, or a supine antagonist. Speaking of guilt, do you know that Joshua Kunitz, a person who was once second in my heart after you, was told that he would be expelled by the party if he were seen talking to me. Take heed, Olson, the prudential Celt. Yea, he, and others, I mean Kunitz, could review books in the Herald Tribune, and when a book of mine was published, the Marxian myrmidons saw to it that my book was thrown into Limbo. You saw to it too; for you were one of them. Do you imagine that I would take bread out of the mouth of Kunitz who had been my friend. Nay, but you took it out of mine, not only the crust we cast upon the waters, but something far more valuable, the justice in our marrow, something that drives us on to other planets, and into inward spaces we believe may lead us to ALPHA, LOGOS OR GOD. Bah, sentimentality, mysticism, primitivism, but I stand by it, and when the day of reckoning cometh, let us see who has observed that "government of words" more obediently, you or I. The books already written are the reply. You can do it, if you will throw down your affectations, all those prissy verbalisms about being literary. The reason you want a literary relation with me is that you are furtive; you want only intimacy with some one who gives you big physiological ease; that's what everybody wants in their false polity. So long as there are no friendships, and people refuse to call love by the plain name that it is, we will be doomed as a nation, and our literature won't be worth more than that infamous poem of yours, or all the XYZ nonsense, or all that kind of congealed alphabet strutting. Go back, I tell you, to your speculations, write about them as well as you can, never mind the people, or marx, or antimarx, use the books you have ransacked. You tell me I am not serious, are you droll? You damage your lines repeatedly because you

want to be the vernacular clown or to be the jolly outhouse versifier, it gives you, you think, the common Touch. Ay, Touch, could you have but understood it, why you might have made some of my mistakes which appeared in that miscreant magazine, called Nimbus. Ay, fox, did you get into that periodical?

My principal charge against you as a human being is that you are a self-lover, my complaint about you as a writer is that you deliberately refuse to find out what element is yours and to work in it. Sure, you will make as many errors as I do, but you will come out with a truthful book, and not with a page and a half poem every year or so. Now, you know I hate the cult of size, but it is time to reveal your nature. It's no good going down to Guatamala, and I don't care who you went down for, and then after imagining that you are a pristine Quiche Maya, and that Kinsborough is just too niggling for you, you do another little diary. What makes you think that John Lloyd Stephens is better than Kingsborough or Sahagun. I found him a great bore; sure the drawings by Catherwood are very good, but what do I mine? Are you sure you have a better understanding of the Inca than Garcilasso? If so, produce the book, and stop prattling.

Well, Charles, I'll take your corrections when you cease being arty with me? I said all this comes out your craft; you know you are very surreptitious. That is why you made acknowledgements to me on page 87 or 89. You can't be forthright; that is why you never told me you had a child; you like to have secrets; for some reason you feel they enlarge your nature, dilate your life which is as pathetic and as monstrous as my own. [In Olson's hand in margin: "the *Bastard*: no thanks"] You also want to sting a man whose greatest blemish was that he spent all of his time trying to help you.

Now, it is my right, even in a land where liberty is word in black mouths, the marxist as well as the reactionary orifice, which has confounded whole people, and made every body either suspect or an informer. I did not complete that sentence, but I say I shall talk about you if I feel so minded, and it really is none of your business. If you want to pillory me for making wrong assertions about our friendship

that is your affair. What you do with your wife, or your child (I am glad that of the two of us, you at least have not been deprived of your son, and here again the communists entered into my private life), or with other women, I do not talk about. But what you did to me is quite another matter, Charles. I know you as you were to me; I do not know what you are to Bob. I am sure you are his friend just as you were not mine. We were involved with one another for too many years for either of us to pretend that it has not weighed upon us very heavily. The reason I did not reply to your first letter is that I could not understand it; besides, I had great doubts that you could ever be sincere with me, and avow the many wrongs you had done to a man who had been your benefactor. Who can pardon the man who has conferred as many benefits as I did upon you, o my quondam friend.

You also have a word here, gooks, which I do not know. Is there such a word? Or are you again being your own gull. Why help nature; you'll be a fool enough without mimicing an ass, you or I.

At least there is Black Mountain, one of my most paltry gifts to you; still you were in my heart, and your plight, when I even bedevilled you to spare you all the ills and wrack of your commonwealth. Tell me, simple man, what do you have to do for a man to make him hate you; give him gold, shirts, ducats, boats; 'tis dangerous. Be aloof, assume the stony visage; he might freeze, go screaming shirtless. Suppose you wound him, wound him in a mortar, tear out his tongue; will that fetch him? Is it true that if we clothe and feed a man we sow dragon's teeth?

One last word: have the greatest reverence for your own GIFT; don't meddle with it, let it come through; are you water, be it, as I think you are; the deluge is your Sin, work in it, in a good, clear language, do not be empty, or slyly plain.

EDWARD

Black Mt *Nov 18/55*

My dear Edward:

It's a very great relief to know that it was my failure to do anything about THE FLEA which lies behind that word ingrate you have thrown at me now so many years. And for the simplest reason: that that was the moment, that it was my turn to speak, and that I spent —was it six weeks, in any case I have the pages and pages of it—doing exactly what I took it I was beholden to do, do a review.

I honestly cannot follow how you see me a part of a Marxian conspiracy against you over that book—or over your separation from Winifred. If you recall, as of the latter, I appeared in court on your behalf in New Rochelle—in other words acted according to my own lights. I mention it solely that I did not—found myself unable to finish any review of FLEA by the same process: my own lights. (My letters to Creeley at the time fully corroborate the effort I made to deal with THE FLEA in the way I took it I was the one to do it.)

I know now, from the Nimbus piece, where I was stuck on THE FLEA. (Yet if I hadn't gone at THE FLEA sentence by sentence, taking each one apart, as well as I might, in all the ways a sentence is composed of all the things it is made of—including the unknown language each of us, any of us, is an agent of, willy-nilly;—I'd not have been able to find out how to find the LA SALLE passage, and how to see that it exists despite the total rest of the Nimbus pages.) It was this difficulty—*and no other*—which prevented me.

And if you weren't seeking some more suspect reason, like conspiracy, you might, Edward, have asked or found out that my reason was my own—as, for example, you so easily throw down the O'RYAN thing in BMR without asking yourself why a man of an order you do respect might so patently say shit!

It's either this rush, Pell-Mell, or some pre- which is such a missing of another person, Ed, that the other person says, come/ off/ it. Literally.

You ought very quietly to ask yourself, how right are you—at least about those whom you do have a considerable notion they are serious.

I wish one could exchange perceptions with you on the vernacular. Like I say, with scholarship, it's the pincer one wants today to get at matters. But if you mistake the O'Ryan, it's hopeless: of course you'll think I share a "desire to degrade music, sounds, English, rites, art", and that sd desire is a scatological one: who could stay with *the substantive* of the present and not appear so—*substantively*?

But to leap off the substance to whatever you do (Egypt, Judea, etc.) *is* that the greater risk? Longinus' "great chances"?

Ask yrself some *first* questions in your search for *beginnings*

That is, I can not be so interested in what you do there on La Salle without recognizing that there is attention, and achievement on your part, on "beginnings"

And of course you and I often come to the same things and places, because I am also interested in beginnings

But do I need to stress to you that there are several sorts of beginnings? And that the question of *origin* is as subtle as the morphological one? I could write an essay on you on La Salle just in terms of what Alpha of what "great waters"

the discrepancy is great between us if, as you write in this letter, it does square away that "I have been your enemy all the while you have been my friend".

I guess you are in an all or nothing proposition.

Here, for me, it's the same as I found it in THE FLEA and have said it to you as of the Nimbus: I can love the La Salle

part, and desire to say why; and I can find you so wrong in all the rest of it, so importantly wrong that, like I say, because I think these are important matters, find that if I had to say anything in print about you I'd have to try to say why and how I think you are wrong.

And

I *don't want to*. Can't you see that?

In other words, just making it black and white,you stiff it against any one else. You begin, & also end up, Edward, with a whole system, an applied and applicable system. And it's too much: a man has got to do more than you do in the *first* instance, than throwing up your hands afterward:

I am referring

to a knot about you which you have to undo because you haven't. I mean these declarations that *after* the writing, for example, that you don't "know whether it's good or bad", that you have been "foolish, bathetic, tumid", that you are "wildly alone". They are the most devilish sort of dodgings behind which you throw yourself because they are *true* for any man. But your use of them, as a black against a previously stated white, makes you right for a wrong reason. Or something. I'm not trying hard enough to say it. But it's there.

And it's

there when you call me your enemy while you call yourself my friend. I'm sure we are both.

But the fact that you will have it this way puts stones up. For it isn't an either or.

Or at least my own vision of experience don't find it that way.

That's what I mean by the discrepancy.

And as

a result of this discrepancy I find all you reply about "literary relationship" rant. I don't want to. For inside it is much that is true, and feeling, evident, honest feeling.

But it's loaded, Edward. As wrong as it's right. And the wrong you won't ask yourself. So the right can't be

dealt with can't be *used*, by the person—honest it can't.

You got me set up a certain way. I ain't that way. But I'm not not that way because of the reasons you then go on, by the same stone and black-white, sticks, and system-premises, to apply. That is, you set it up, Edward. And then you deal with it as you've set it up.

Or if suddenly the difference or the discrepancy—from how you'd have it confronts you, you wash yourself out by cries of "of course I fail", or, I am "wildly alone".

And of course you damn well don't wash yourself out. What washes out is the very thing you've removed in the first instance—a little of the life of the thing. whether it's *what you are writing about* or *to whom you are writing*

Of course they are *one thing*. Friendship is one thing. Etc.
But if it doesn't go the way you, Edward, want it, it isn't therefore only two things. Or one of the two explanations. Only choice is binary. The rest has a good chance of being *multiple*.

"Pangs of solitude". And how. Plural. And for each man *many*.

You ask me, why did I not "defend" THE FLEA. It wasn't for me, defense. I didn't know it had to be defended. I don't think I ever have seen, to this day, anybody anywhere saying anything in print about it.—My sense was, one person, Charles Olson, ought to speak of this book in print.

Please tell me where I "disavowed" the book?

Please tell me exactly how it turns out that I am a marxist?

Please tell me by what act I kept FLEA—"saw to it", is your word from being reviewed?

Please tell me, Edward, what you are talking about—how I "took" bread out of your mouth"?

The facts here just have to be facts [added in pencil script] For god knows if there are facts—& I suddenly remember some letter from a New Directions secretary (!)—then the more I should want you di-

rectly to know all I did do, & why I didn't finish.

God damn you really. You make it such a shame that I ever accepted anything from you. Why do you have to do this, sad man? Why do you have to paw over everything until the other person can't even retain what they valued? What a destructuion. —I don't really want my life if it is to be confused by you as as pathetic and monstrous as your own. If it is to you, I say go aside, go aside. Leave what was.

It is so *indiscrete*, what you do and say with *every* thing which has happened between you and another person—everything. It is a *dirtying*, Edward, which I wish you knew was so, and knew to stop it.

And it is for this reason that I say you don't have the right that you so grossly say "you shall talk about me and it is none of my business". It is, when you use what you know because you were my friend; and because you use it now for frustrate purposes. You ought to get yourself clear here. You ought to. Mind me, Edward, get clear about what is my business, and what's yours. It's possible. And it's important. I know when you are hysterical, Edward. We both do. And what happens. Things you say here are of that order. Don't say them. Really, don't. To me, or to others. Remind yourself.

I respect your distinction that it is what I am supposed to have done to you. Of course you must speak of that. // But let it be clear *what I did do.* These are facts which better be accurate, what you claim I did, to Creeley or anybody else. //but stick to it. I want my fate out of it: yours, is your business. Mine—well...

It just comes out such a *shame* that you must prate and orate when there is so much can happen, and to be done, there is such little time in which to do it. and because you have it *large* you make even what does or has happened *waste, straight loss*

your *words*, Edward, your words: consider them

It is such a *shame* not to be able—because you won't let it—to stay *interested* in you. That's a *loss.*

Make what you will of it,
but I don't want to sign my name

[signed] CHARLES OLSON

[postscript] Yes, I

November 24, 1955

Dear Charles:

Most of your letter is very quiet, and I read that portion with sympathy. You find it hard, Charles, to comprehend very simply words, although you are much given to the vernacular. When a man tells you he is hungry, don't ask him whether he wants a rock, a piece of water, or bivalve? Give him bread, and if you have more, a pair of gudgeons. When I wrote to you that I was wildly alone, I am saying that I had at one period, when you forsook the man who had conferred more benefactions upon you than any one in the world, I had in my sorrow not a soul to turn to. You are poor, but you only relished my companionship when I could give you benefits, my table which was yours at any hour.

You are my great champion in one line in those two pages of yours reprinted in Williams' Autobiography. Do you expect me to be overcome. There are many loaves, and getting our work printed is a bread you and I sorely need. The Flea of Sodom was buried by marxists and homosexuals. You are an advocate of communism, as you have proclaimed in your writing, and I never knew one stalinist to defend my work. A weak friend is far worse that a stalwart foe, and though you could write me many letters on the Flea of Sodom, you found it impossible to print your feelings. Why not? — If you think that the mangled people in Guatemala have no other hope save in communism, you say it quite clearly, and not in a private letter which no one is likely to see.

When I was one of the co-editors of TWICE A YEAR who profited by it, you or I? Was i forthright in your defense. Did I not throw away

any advantage I had, and which I needed to urgently, to see to it that LEAR AND MOBY-DICK was printed, and not just furtively admired by me. You have to be plain about simple acts, otherwise you won't amount to much as a writer. I was *never* your adversary, although I am glad that you acknowledge that you were mine. I am not happy to know what apostasies you are guilty of; I am only *glad* to know the suffering truth. When you were in severe trouble in your relationship with Joanne my apartment and table were yours, and also these rocks at Engeddi to which David fled from Saul. Do I tell the truth? When you wanted a Guggenheim followship, I did all in my power to get one essay you had done into the hands of authors whom you respected, and the strategy worked. Did it occur to you that it was a rueful irony that though I could succeed for you, that no foundation will give me a pence for my labors. I am older than you, deeper seasoned in books and at least a journeyman in tribulations, but I cannot achieve the advantages I could make available for you. Despite my fracas with Dorothy Norman, and on your account, you continued your connection with her. I regard that as low and shrewd. I broke with her over you, but you were clever enough to go on because she was useful to you, although by then she abhorred me. I was such a fool in my friendship for you that when you told me that she had practiced an outrage upon you by making you pay a $2.50 taxi fare, even for such a small matter I fell into a passion with her, and was told by Stieglitz and her that I was trying to blackmail her! You know what was the blackmail; when I resigned I asked her in return for a year's service, without pay or publication, to print your work and three essays by Marsden Hartley.

When Do These Bones Live appeared, you were regarded as too green and callow by the ruffians of the Muses to do a review of my book? and I never asked you to do anything of that sort? Only once, when I saw that my very life as a writer was imperilled by the communistic roustabouts and the pathics did I appeal to you to come to the defense of a book you said you fervently admired. What hap-

pened? You were bold enough in your epistles to me, and wrote me eight to ten typewritten paged letters about that volume, but precious and too pusillanimous to be my buckler. [added in script in margin:] Laughlin asked for a statement for the bookjacket, & my *friend refused*! Were you Iago, the jackdaw! Be plain; what were you. It is you, not I, who stand before Minos, in all my life, I know no one to be so base.

So few reviews of the volume appeared that ever since it has been a great travail for me to get published. Williams had done a prodigal encomium on the Flea of Sodom, and when it was sent to Margaret Marshall, a marxist, who ran a graveyard bookreview section in the Nation, she said that I was not important enough to receive such attention. As I told you, Harvey Breit was another burial-croaker. He even said tht he admired certain reviews I was doing then for the New York Times, that is, he admired them, but did not publish them. Would you call him a deceiver and a poltroon? Or can you only understand your own pains, and shun such words when it applies to others and may make you uncomfortable. If you really believe you were my frind, you are doomed. So long as you adhere to this falsehood you will never do another book to equal some of the very lovely pages in CALL ME ISHMAEL. It cannot be Charles; there is a retribution; this I know, and have come to such poor understanding by having my flesh and soul torn out every day. Is this humble speaking, or would you like to believe that I mean something else. You see I do not fall into the short-hand orthography of the businessman, and call this lettering artistic, original, or the people's language. How can you invent words with which to betray and gull the populace and say it is their tongue. What a cloven tongue it is? I abhor Ezra Pound, and look upon those miscreant books of his as more degenerate and reactionary than any tyrant can be. I am not a marxist, but I do not consort with Jew-baiters, or Hitlerite journalists of Hippocrene. No sir; I do all that I can to make my words and acts equal to one another, and if what I write is at odds with what I am, then both are lies.

You say you do not want to sign your name to the letter to me. Are you so foolish as to believe that your epistle is not your signature. And why this species of insolence with the man who has always been your friend and teacher. Even up to a few months ago I was doing what I could to relieve your plight. Now, that you do not care to acknowledge that, and see in my reminding a man whom I have served that he has been perfidious, [do] not say that I pile shame upon an affection which you took when it served you, and threw away, when you imagined that I was no longer useable. The truth is you have some real vulpine blood; your properties are mixed, and betraying is a kind of artistic cunning that appeals to you. You thought, perhaps, that I was done for as a writer. Ay, many mistakes I may make (I remind you that I mean just that, put the words together as they are said, and they mean, I write, and commit more errors than I can surmise); but don't depend upon my being a torpid failure, unable to be of use to you or any other man. Only nature will be my final defeat, and that, too, may be my triumph; then, without all this alloy of youth, you can say the words about some book of mine, you may happen to care for, without really imagining that I ever gave you a shame that you had not brought for yourself.

[in script:] Thought to include this [arrow]

Now, I take no exception to any criticism you may want to make of anything I do. I should like to be able to understand what you are saying, which I must tell you very strongly that I don't. I can read the masters but cannot comprehend you. I don't think, either, you should make much of a very bad poem in the Black Mt. Review; just don't print that species of foolishness again if you can help it. When you want to write on the Quiché Maya, do a very earnest job on it, and don't bring out as a book ill-assorted thoughts, and uncreated ideas you hurried into the hands of a sensitive young man as a serious labor of your intellect. If you can write better on the Indians than I can, let the earth bless you, for the ground is very corrupt, and the dust we call books is an evil vine.

I could be lofty with you when you threaten me that me that you

might lose interest in me and my work. But why should I? Since you are not my friend, why should I hanker after you as a reader? Will a man, who cannot give you his affections, ever be a friend of your thoughts? Books are wondrous pythian oracles when they are loved, and parched prophecies, when they are read by those who secretly hate us. Now, Charles, do as you like. That is your life. Again, you must forgive me, but I will not write about your intimacies with women, or whether you have done this or that nonsense with some doxy; that is your comedy and woe, and I hope you are lucky. My relation with you, and how ill you guerdoned me for a heart plagued by your every mishap, that, Charles, is my hyssop and should I choose to drink the bitter herbs or water alone with another, is my own portion and right.

As for a literary relationship with you, or anybody else, I prefer the passions of a Horatio for Hamlet than some ice-cold and epicene epistles from a man who watched me suffer on the curbstones of New York, disavowed by the hacks of Grub Street and the diseased politicals; instead of honoring the man who had been his father by asking him to be his guest for a week-end now and then, gave me for a hearth, a table, and warm, loving talk, a letter; ay, the letter killeth the spirit, and the friend.

Do I speak sense, or would you be so ridiculous as to call this ranting, or how, pray, does one say to you, I am hungry, feed me, I am alone, give me your hand, I am derided, do not pretend that this is an abstruse phrase. Yea, yea, I know a little about the heart, but enough that I can never know it; just enough to understand when it is open and when shut, when good and kind, when clandestine.

I sign my name as I always do in a rebuke, in love, in sorrow.

EDWARD DAHLBERG

△

BOOK REVIEWS

Poems. PAUL CELAN.
Translated by Michael Hamburger.
Persea Books. New York: 1980.

by CID CORMAN

No child of us ever gets over the experience and recurrent awareness of having been born(e). And the corollary fact of being parented/extremely cared for/looked after. From these nodes our lives "develop"—try to extend—to take in—accommodate—grasp—enfold—make use of the light/breath/death given.

Through lane it lay—through bramble—
Through clearing and through wood—
Banditti often passed us
Upon the lonely road.

The wolf came peering curious—
The owl looked puzzled down—
The serpent's satin figure
Glid stealthily along—

The tempests touched our garments—
The lightning's poinards gleamed—
Fierce from the Crag above us
The hungry Vulture screamed—

The satyr's fingers beckoned—
The valley murmured "Come"—
These were the mates—
This was the road
These children fluttered home.

Which came to:

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality . . .

Paul Celan—whose every poem records a struggle to live *and* die—one of Emily Dickenson's translators—in *Atemwende*/1967 (*Breath-turning*) wrote:

In the Serpentcarriage, on
past the white Cypress,
through the Flood
they drove you.

But in you, from
Birth,
foamed the other Source,
up the black
Jet Remembrance
you climbed to day.

I've used the German noun capitals—but only to emulate Emily's practice too.

The white may be winter or dream or allusion to the "white election." Or all. Celan like Emily depended on remembering.

Celan—and the fact of the Holocaust and his painful survival—of sorts—of it—his gifted guilt—are basic—is full of literary byplay and other allusions—but it is a poetry he ekes out of his dwindled nativeland—ironically—the German language.

It is a poetry addressed to the dead and/or the beloved. The *du*/thou. Buber *is* implied. The Jewish relation/relating explicit. Harrowed and harrowing.

TO STAND in the shadow
of the stigma in the air.

For-no-one-and-nothing-stand.
Unbeknownst,

for you
alone.

With all there is room for there,
even without
speech.

We are addressed also as survivors. Each of us in our painful singularity.

The act of poetry here has become the act of life itself. Not easy. Decidedly uneasy.

As Celan has said: "The language/speech remained unlost, in spite of all. But it had to pass through its own unresponsiveness, pass through its own fearful muting, pass through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech. It went through and came out with no words for what had happened. Yet it went through that happening. Went through and can walk again in daylight, 'enriched' by it all.

"In this language, those years and the years that followed, I tried to write poems: to speak, to orient myself, to say where I was and where I was bound, to adumbrate reality . . .

". . . poems are en route: proceeding toward something.

"What? Towards something as yet unclaimed, that can be taken over, occupied, perhaps towards a You that can be spoken to, a reality that can be addressed.

". . . This is the striving of one over whose head fly stars of man's making, of one who is without a firmament to cover him (in this till now unsuspected sense), of one who is out in the open, totally, desperately, who goes towards language with his being, wounded by reality, seeking reality."

This is—in a sense—then—an existential poetry with a vengeance. But what could easily have become a confessional-type of poetry has been consistently transmuted—sometimes transfigured—into an act of sculptured language.

As if—like a Michelangelo of words—Celan were compelled to drawing meaning out of the possibility implied in speech: the dream of communicating. But not the Zukofskyan "order that can speak to all men."

Celan had clearly been too shattered to entertain such an ideal. Simply—desperately—painfully—as he admits—to come out of the nightmare of his early existence—the absolute insecurity of a "world"—into a "reality" or firm/convincing place and amongst people capable of trust/faith.

His *Psalm* naturally runs:

> Noone kneads us again from earth and loam,
> noone conjures our dust.
> Noone.
>
> Praised be thou, noone.
> For thy sake will
> we bloom.
> Facing
> thee.
>
> A nothing
> were we, are we, will
> we be, blossoming:
> the nothing's—, the
> noone's rose.
>
> With
> the pistil soulbright,
> the stamen heaven-wasted,
> the crown red
> from the scarletword that we sang
> over, o over
> the thorn.

Celan lacks Michelangelo's faith. He is perforce modern. The early poems of grief—"the black milk"—the poems of tender affection—grasping for the food of love—groping for something sure—go on into the later poems of starker vocables—into a breakdown into syllables—into childlike beginnings—to pry sense out of sound—but lapsing often into "Pallaksh. Pallaksh."

He turns to poets of desperation—Mandelstam and Rimbaud—Du Bouchet and Yesenin. There are moments when he almost breaks free—brief openings clenched. Iron shoes bound to delicate hands—his own

image—and the cherry bleeds for him. This is not exactly Marianne Moore's "What sap went through the thread/To make the cherry red?"

HOW YOU extinguish yourself in me:

yet to the last
bedraggled
knot of breath
you stick with a
splinter of
life.

More and more there is less and less for him—the poems becoming minimal—not unlike my own work or William Bronk's:

I CAN SEE YOU STILL: an echo,
touchable with feeler-
words, at the parting's
edge.

Your face shies slightly,
when all at once
it's lamplike bright
in me, at the spot
where one at the painfullest says
Never.

No one can find much joy in this man's work. It is wrought clearly at the "painfullest." Death becomes the only pity.

That he was accused by Claire Goll of imitating her husband's poetry—the poetry of a friend—stuck in his heart's throat undeniably. And in all fairness it must be said that there was for a time a family resemblance. But the charge was blown out of proportion insensitively. There is a tender little poem to his son (?) marking the fact—shades of *Bicycle Thief*—that the child's father has been called a "thief."

The poems are—as everyone has remarked—often seemingly impenetrable and untranslatable—as word-order and words are fragmented and man-handled and searched for root-sense or pushed into archaic sources to renew lost meanings. And Yiddish—the most colloquial—is searched for warmth and body—for motherlife and nearness/dearness.

Celan's inventiveness/originality one feels is not something he strove for—but an engendered fact—the fruit of the deepest undying need. It didnt—evidently—save him—but it undoubtedly helped keep him alive as us.

His voice is one we cannot deny—though we may balk at it.

> THREADSUNS
> over the grayblack desolateness.
> A tree-
> high idea
> grasps at the lightsound: there are
> still songs to be sung beyond
> mankind.

"Manunkind" Cummings said.

The volume Persea publishers has now brought out gives one a fair chance to become exposed to Celan's dark light. Michael Hamburger's versions (in a fortunately bilingual rig) are journeyman work—never exciting but generally useful. And in the face of such difficulties one is grateful (I am) for anything. It is a rule with me: dont complain about translations of poetry; do better instead—if you can—or learn to read the original.

The printing is often faulty and punctuation gets lost. There are errors in transcription and in lineation—but there's enough going to work with/read by.

This is perhaps the best and proper place to add a few notes to my personal relation with Celan. I wish he was capable of hearing me when he was alive. I tried. To get through.

We met—in Paris—in 1955. Via a dear mutual friend. She was enthusiastic about his poetry and wanted us to meet. We went to his cafe—out in the suburbs—and sat outdoors for an hour or two. He was taciturn—though he conversed with her amicably and I felt in him both shyness—a touch of distrust/uncertainty—a certain locked-in-himself weight—or brooding melancholy.

At that time there were only the two early books—*Mohn und Gedächtnis* and *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle.* The former was given to me by my friend and the latter I bought at Flinker's. With assistance from Edith (Aron) I started translating his work. It was attractive—and I was the first to publish work of his in English (almost

at once)—but it was the later work that excited me—as the language began to jump/to intensify beyond formality.

I translated every book of his as it appeared—until the posthumous work.

My desire to publish the poetry in quantity—in *Origin* and elsewhere—grew. Permission was refused: no reason ever given. But I discovered—through others like Helmut Bonheim—that Celan was refusing translation publication in English—at least—to everyone.

Finally in 1969 I decided—against all threat—to publish some of my versions with a note saying: "These poems are being offered here against the author's wishes, reluctantly, but in the feeling that the realm of poetry transcends personal issues and noting that some fifteen years' work . . . is involved."

Needless to say—with the very small circulation of *Origin* (300 copies) I could have kept quiet and Celan and his publishers (Suhrkamp) would never have been aware of the printing. But that isnt my style. And it certainly wasnt an attempt at notoriety (that too has never been my way). In fact—apart from interest from a handful of poets—there was no response to the material. Except from Celan via his publisher.

A suit had been instituted against me. Pointless—certainly. *Origin* has always been a non-profit operation—by design. And I've never profited or tried to profit—financially—from translating work of any living author. And I've only translated work that had my wholehearted interest.

All this had been made clear to Celan and I had begged him to desist. I told him of my care for and with his work—which was exceptional—and we had numerous friends in common—chiefly André du Bouchet (who had mutually translated each other).

No use. Letters came and Japanese lawyers were already involved by the time he committed suicide. I feel now and felt then a twinge of guilt—for the last word I had from his attorney—written me in English—made a rather Freudian slip: where the "prosecute" came out "persecute." (I wrote a gentle but chiding letter to Celan a month or two before his death calling his attention to this lapse and I fear it may have fed into his mental state.)

The fact remains—as I have

noted with others who have felt persecuted and who—in the Holocaust—were persecuted—that there is a tendency towards persecutory behavior in return. To assume—sadly—the seemingly stronger role—the upper hand.

SPEECHWALLS, spaceinwards—
reeled in into yourself,
you go bawling through up to the
lastwall.

The fogs burn.

The heat hangs within you.

Or: (in part)

. . . say that Jerusalem *is*,
say it, as though I were this
your White,
as though you were
mine,

as though without us we could be,

I leaf you open, for ever,

you pray, you bed
us free.

And the act of poetry unremitting—unable to save a thing—making us feel nothing finally unreal:

BOTH's unscarred bodies,
both's deathleaf over the bareness,
both's unrealized face.

Drawn ashore by
the whitest root
of the whitest
tree.

Editor's Note: This essay by Cid Corman was originally assigned as a book review. It arrived at SULFUR as an engaging piece on Paul Celan that pays little attention to the book in question. Readers should note that, although there are two paragraphs referring to Michael Hamburger's translations of Celan, the translations cited by Corman are Corman's, not Hamburger's. △

1-10. Barrett Watten
This.

by Jed Rasula

Since *Three Poems*, Ashbery's work has been the paramount poetics of density. But since the academics have been reading Ashbery in the light of psychology's panopticon, the small presses have been casting up bits of dense material far more appropriate to the *poetics* of such a situation, in which the materiality is vivid, intractable, and almost all there is in (or of) the text. Watten's book could be characterized as granite-like, except that it's so clearly man-made. Concrete, if that weren't already a term for poetry quite distinct from *1-10*. The cover design suggests a new formalism, going back to the drafting boards of the Bauhaus and the incendiary art-in-society movements of Europe between world wars. Like that work, Watten's is possessed of an austerity beautiful in its classic, toneless, uniform way,

> ...Pressing,
> Yielding to the arguments of
> mass. The hawk
> tears the sparrow to pieces.
> Coded sparks, holding patterns.
> The privilege
> of vanishing speech.

1-10 succeeds in being all surface, or all measurable in terms of mass, weight, yield, pressure, volume and similar characteristics more often applied to the visual arts. Watten's work is anything but 'visual' in orientation; but its functionality in "the short black branches of the eye" speaks of a different scale of density than the visual can, strictly, hold.

Selected Poems: Beyond Even Faithful Legends. Bill Bisset
Talonbooks

Selected by the author from over 40 small (often phantom) publications, the poems from 1962-1976 offered here are so fine I think they must be his best, though I have no access to the originals to compare the selection with. But taken as a book in its own right, the integrity of the work, in its beauty and

softness abiding *in vision*, is its yield. Bissett's idiosyncratic spelling, strings of letters across a page, and fluid drawings throughout, all work together more successfully than American precedents (cummings, Ginsberg and d.a. levy are three kin). A beautiful book; a heartbreaking sensitivity; visionary not by yearning and straining after enlightenment, but simply by being alert to the political clampdowns of the sixties and seventies and knowing that even a one-man colony maintained on the fringe of the catastrophe would take a lifetime's attentions.

grandmothers land sumtimes past
what yr mind can do business with

maybe we bettr get th
business dun bettr with each othr then
stop takin th oil blood outta her

stop throwin sulphur dioxide
onto her
stop tyin up parts uv her stop
poisonig th fishes th pupils uv her
great eyes

—*J.R.*

My Poetry. DAVID BROMIGE
The Figures

My Poetry proves conclusively that Bromige is a wit, and his humor is akin to those medieval humours which preceded psychology before Freud sobered it up. Bromige reports a childhood encounter with the old shrink himself: "Taking out his hankie, he dipped it in Pooh's Cup, & then applied it to my wounds." Such spectral visitations are stuffing in the sofa one reclines on in the office of Memory. Bromige applies his talents to giving us the scoop on a dozen or so earlier poems, presented in a mock-critical format, which enables him to spin some tall prose, proving again that poets—if not their own best critics—are their own best readers. A portrait of the author, begging hand extended, squatting in front of a 'please excuse renovations' Bank of Babylon sign, says it all. With *Tight Corners, My Poetry* is Bromige's best.

—*J.R.*

Themes and Variations. JOHN CAGE
Station Hill

As time goes on, Cage may be even more gratefully remembered for his writing than his music. If the four substantial Wesleyan collections intimate poetry, *Themes and Variations* is an unhesitating submersion. There are mesostics on the names of 15 men important to Cage; and while they're not meant to be addressed to them or pertinent to them, all the section speak out of the warmth of friendship. The result is a book-length poem that shares much of the interplay with musical recursions that Zukofsky's does. The handsome format delineates the themes as they appear and also offers exacting stopwatch times indicating the pace of Cage's reading (it takes an hour). While these features make one aware of the performative intent, the text on the page is full of subtle marvels; by the end, the reader's gratitude is complete. In this poem, Cage seems to have arrived at an infectious cadence, simplicity of design and purpose, and just enough mind-static to enable pleasure to run its course and finish with the text as if coincidentally. Which it is not, but is a very great skill. —*J.R.* △

Under The Bridge. CARLA HARRYMAN.
This Press. 1980.

by CRAIG WATSON

> If you take a body apart you will not have gone
> far enough unless you are willing to go farther.
> *Sites*

The deconstruction of reality is the beginning of a process leading to knowledge, but one must be "willing to go farther" and to encounter whole contexts as well as microcosmic phenomena. The experience of contextual systems is sited in occasions of composition, the relation of one point to another by continuous interaction.

Carla Harryman's *Under The Bridge* collects 19 short prose works which

explore various compositional surfaces of phenomena and perception. While focusing on compositional processes, Harryman has avoided abstraction as a foundation for the work and each text contains a line of syllogistic activity clearly grounded in the specificity of event and cognition.

Harryman is more concerned with directions of sight than eventual objects. Each attitudinal stance yields a context which in turn produces a construction in which organizing principles and linguistic resonance have equal impact. While writing often about environmental-self relationships, she explores solitude without necessarily describing alienation. Her environments are systems of action which present occasions for ideas as well as for objects.

> What year is this he asked another on the banks of the river.
>
> But land is not in question here. Only the day. The range of vision. The distance between the mountains behind the lake and the mountains behind the men who face the lake.
> *Jordan River*

The structure and syllogistic content of her work suggest the primacy of composition through both tonal and semantic signification. In most pieces the sentence is resolved to syntactic completion; sentences tend to pivot on very strong verbs which serve to propel her nouns into dynamic relations. Each sentence is a tightly coiled spring of possible actions and consequences.

Despite her syntactic skill, it is the movement from one sentence to another that establishes the text's most defining tensions. This focus on syllogistic variety increases attention to the language contained in the sentences as well as to perceptual systems of connection and measurement. Besides presenting densely rich and beautiful surfaces of vision, Harryman simultaneously produces an experientially engaging and fulfilling sense of compositional possibilities.

> There is, I believe, a way to regain consciousness. You have to move around as if you were part of something else.
> *Au Nom*

△

Midnight Mass. PAUL BOWLES.
Black Sparrow Press. 1981.

by CORNELIA EMERSON

Midnight Mass, a collection of recent stories by Paul Bowles, an American expatriate living in Tangier, confirms the claim that he is one of the most accomplished prose stylists in the language today. Spare, simple, lucid, evocative without being over-eloquent, his sentences reveal the mixture of human motives, unfold the strangest events and circumstances in such a way that in retrospect they seem inevitable. "Ten or twelve years ago there came to live in Tangier a man who would have done better to stay away.... His name was Duncan Marsh, and he was said to have come from Vancouver.... By the time his story reached the cocktail-party circuit he was dead.... In all this there was nothing extraordinary; it was assumed that Marsh had been one more victim of slow poisoning." This is a style that confronts fatality calmly and contemplatively; it induces a kind of fatalism. ("It was written," a Moslem might say, meaning "It was the will of God.")

All but two of these stories are set, or have their point of origin, in Morocco. Most of them concern the interplay of Westerners (English and American, mainly) with their Moroccan servants, lovers and acquaintances. In the stories where all the characters are Moroccan, the same cultural tensions carry through—with one character promulgating Western habits, hygiene and values, while another clings, often cannily, to native systems of thought. In all these relationships, the balance of power is subtle, given to odd reversals and surprising denouements.

In "The Dismissal," Abdelkrim loses his position because his employer can't understand his impulse to make himself scarce for a few months after witnessing a robbery. In "Madame and Ahmed," a gardener acts to safeguard his job by tricking the lady of the house—in her best interest and his own. "Here to Learn" relates an astonishing fairy tale of innocent upward mobility. The peasant girl Malika, who possesses nothing but some rudimentary Spanish, striking physical beauty and the ability to assimilate the fashionable taste purveyed by Vogue magazine, passes form protector to protector, moving from her poor village to Tangier, Madrid, Paris, Lausanne and finally Los Angeles, where she ends up a fabulously wealthy widow not

yet out of her teens.

Readers of Paul Bowles' *Collected Stories 1939-1976* or such novels as *The Sheltering Sky* may be disappointed not to find in this collection the same sense of existential starkness, the intuition that in these hot, sun-stricken desert regions one is alone and in touch with some unmediated cosmic ferocity. The characters in these stories live in a more densely populted universe, and social contacts universally mediate their experience. The ferocity here is human ferocity, motivated by fear, greed, love or simply fatal misunderstanding. In the final story a Moroccan servant unwittingly medicates her master to death, thinking to break the spell of the evil eye he has laid on her little daughter. Having plumbed the truth of this event, the narrator thinks: "What constitutes a crime? There was no criminal intent—only a mother moving in the darkness of ancient ignorance." Yet this darkness is still unfathomable, of mythic dimensions, however human it may be. △

The Woe Shirt: Caribbean Folk Tales. PAULÉ BARTÓN. Translated by Howard A. Norman with drawings by Norman Laliberté.

Penmaen Press, Ltd. 1980.

by MARTIN NAKELL

The elegant design of this book ignites the excitement of the tales within. A slim volume, its design delights in itself and its subject. Each of the thirteen tales as told by Paulé Bartón is illustrated with a drawing by Norman Laliberté. Each drawing has a narrative-pictorial relationship to the story, as well as an immediacy of its own, a dream presence, childlike and passionate, permeated by the timelessness which radiates from the core of movement.

The tales themselves are so intimate you want to gather them in and make them a part of your own dreams, your own language. The Caribbean, sing-song English, so musically carried by Howard A. Norman's translation, comes out as fresh, awakened language: "Belem did tinker repair his bicycle by the stink-toe tree. Better to work there it smells so bad, work gets done no

lazy quick."

The undercurrent of these tales is an element so common to folk tales, so important for us, and so difficult for us to get into our own creations: a natural sense of interrelationship between things human and otherwise. In one story, "Sleep Talking," husband Jomi and his wife Mari plan to build a boat. Mari advises: "First we get tools that know this work good, with memories for boat building." Ah, yes.

And if that is what underlies the tales, then what moves them is a sense of universal understanding and connection always coming into formation which is elemental, charming, substantive, frightening. There are a few of the folksy type tales of the gambler who comes to town and is outsmarted by the local, but as the mood of the book carries us into its subtle kingdom we encounter a justice at work in the world which is implacable, rich, and of a dark illumination. Franz Kafka, in his remarkable parables, can hardly equal a story as chillingly vivid as "Emilie Plead Chosse One Egg," which produces, at the depth of a culture filled with magic, an existential dilemma simple, direct, overwhelming, as vicious and as compassionate as Hamlet, yet flaked with down home, domestic humor.

Peter Matthiessen remarks in a note on the back of this book that these tales "would be cluttered by critical comment." I hope this review is just praise. △

Life Supports. WILLIAM BRONK.
North Point. 1981.

by HENRY WEINFELD

The publication of *Life Supports*, which brings together the entire poetic output of William Bronk, is an event of considerable significance to English poetry. A poet of the utmost seriousness and highest ambition, Bronk is one of the finest stylists now writing in the language and one of the few contemporary poets whose work seems destined to last. Yet much of it has previously existed only in limited editions which were difficult to obtain and which did not reach a wide audience.

There are two factors working together which make Bronk's work unique, not only in terms of contemporary poetry but perhaps in terms of a tradition which stretches back much further. (1) The distinction between poetry and philosophic thought is less in evidence in Bronk's work than it is in the work of any other modern poet; indeed, in much of his work this distinction seems almost to dissolve. What Bronk has to say about the nature of reality is of importance in and of itself, and when we read him we do not have to make allowances for the fact that he is a poet. (2) The distinction between poetry and prose is maintained absolutely in Bronk's work, or at least in the best of it, and certainly in its basic intention. This is not merely to assert that Bronk's diction, his syntax and his prosodic structures emerge concretely from his own experience and from his struggle to understand the world—for such is the case with all genuine poets. More specifically, given the discursive cast of Bronk's mind, what this means is that the integrity of the poetic process provides the necessary gauge—or measure—of the value of its abstract assertions.

We can see this process at work in all of Bronk's mature poetry, but perhaps nowhere in purer form than in "The Mind's Limitations Are Its Freedom" (p. 134), one of the sonnets contained in the volume entitled *To Praise The Music*:

> The mind has a power which is unusable
> and this is its real power. What else but the mind
> senses the final uselessness of the mind?
>
> How foolish we were, how smaller than what we are,
> were we to believe what the mind makes of what
> it meets. Whatever the mind makes is not.
>
> You know there are always messages we find
> —in bed, on the street or anywhere, and the mind
> invents a translation almost plausible;
> but it hasn't any knowledge of the language at all.
>
> Sometimes the translations are cryptic in themselves.
> I read them in wonderment. It is a wonderment
> not usable. What could it all mean?
> The mind does this. I stand in awe of the mind.

The poem is in the form of a philosophical argument, and on one level it is

an act of definition, a proof of the proposition stated in its title. Its movement is rigorously logical throughout (or apparently so), and it is completely devoid of images. What we have is a bare statement, without embellishment, and in a strictly linear mode. Yet beneath the tranquil surface of the exposition, there is a dark undercurrent of irony, and this is maintained by the chaste but powerful diction, the measured syntax, the repetitions and rhymes. The poem has the elegance, simplicity and classical objectivity of a fugue, but it is a meditation on an intellectual and spiritual crisis which is central to a modern experience of the world, and it bears the stamp of a unique sensibility. It seems to me to be a great poem, deeply moving and memorable, in its totality and in its every phrase.

The discursive power of Bronk's style consists in its capacity to express propositions about the world through the mediating poetic formalisms of a framework which is essentially rationalistic. From this point of view, it is characteristic of a kind of poetry that Pound classified as *logopoeia*, and its most obvious antecedents can be found in the metaphysical and devotional poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ironcially, however, the rationalist framework of Bronk's poetry is in the service not of rationalism but of an extremely penetrating and all-encompassing scepticism. This paradox is at the heart of Bronk's work.

From this standpoint, Bronk's relationship to ideas is certainly as problematic and as burdened with complexities as that of any other modern poet. Indeed, the conjunction of poetic experience and abstract thought in Bronk's work is as much a response to a modern dilemma as its disjunction is in William's work—to compare cases which are apparently poles arpart. Williams' dictum, "No ideas but in things," delimits the terrain for contemporary American poetry by rooting it in sense experience, thereby skirting the problem of abstract, propositional knowledge. For Bronk, however, the epistemological problem encompasses not only ideas as such but also the immediate products of the senses, and therefore it cannot merely be shunted aside. As a result, it informs his work on the most obvious thematic level as well as on the deepest levels of style. In "Blue Spruces In Pairs, A Bird Bath Between" (p. 4), for example, which is included in *The World, The Worldless*, Bronk's best known collection, the problem is stated explicitly; but actually it is to be found everywhere in his work:

Seen by starlight from the window, fat
blue spruces patch the lawn with darker dark.

Arranged in pairs. People no longer plant
these trees in pairs, with bird baths set between.

Fashions in ornamental planting change.
Houses and yards lose style in twenty years.

Seen by starlight. The universal stars.
Something here is certainly laughably wrong.

Ideas are always wrong. Their separateness
causes a threat to neuter each other out

and leave us without a world as it does here:
heavens and styles collide meaninglessly.

The unsubmissive mind has freedom to be
nothing, worldless — not to exist at all.

Because the various world we sense is not
ever apprehended as one, or formed as one,

ideas are always wrong, always unfixed,
and often their power to make the world real is lost.

Huge factors stand ready to leap in
to alter or destroy a world we defend alone.

This, then, is a poetry of ideas which recognizes that our hold on reality is a function of our capacity to form ideas, but which despairs of their validity. The entire corpus of Bronk's poetry is at once an examination and an embodiment of this paradox. Taken as a whole, I would argue that it represents the most lucid poetic response that we have had to the crisis of Western thought in the twentieth century, a crisis which stems, among other things, from the theoretical and empirical achievments of the sciences and the concomitant demise of classical rationalism. The divide that it has created between subject and object, language and the world it is supposed to represent, has had the effect, in general, of propelling poetry and philosophy in increasingly antogonistic directions. The writers of the century who have

made a significant contribution to poetry have all, in one way or another, responded to this dilemma. For the most part, however, they have had to circumvent the full force of its impact. Often they have retreated into private myths in order to maintain their hold on a poetic totality; often they have reflected the chaos they perceived through the deliberate fragmentation of syntax. Both tendencies have produced great poetry, but one senses that their solutions have been partial and their syntheses inadequate.

In Bronk's work, however, our worldlessness is confronted directly and in virtually all of it modalities; with great power and eloquence. If the poetry despairs of ultimate meaning, it is nevertheless its own testament to meaningfullness. If we come to a greater certainty than this in the future, we shall certainly need to remember where we have been, and it is to these poems, to the poems of William Bronk, that we shall return. △

Asamblea de poetas jóvenes de México. Edited by Gabriel Zaid. Siglo Ventiuno Editores. 1980.

by Eliot Weinberger

—There are now 600 published poets under the age of 40 in Mexico: 170 between the ages of 30 and 40, and 430 poets under 30. The number of poets is therefore growing at the rate of 16% a year, which means that last year an estimated 3524 poets were born in the country. In the year 2017 there will be *one million* Mexican poets.

—The new poets are centralized: 76% live in Mexico City. They are educated (95% attended university) and they are rich: 77% have their own phone, a luxury item in Mexico; 54% live in their own house, not an apartment; 71% of the Mexico City poets live in middle-class or wealthier neighborhoods.

—50% are employed in "cultural diffusion": publishing, journalism, theater, television, radio, movies, museums. (Unlike US poets, they are actively involved in the cultural life of the country in areas other than poetry.) Only 18% teach. (In the US, 38% of all writers teach. For poets alone, the figure is obviously much higher.)

—18% are women: for Mexico, a significant increase.

—Contrary to US practice, the Mexicans do not write only poetry. 35% write non-fiction prose; 27% fiction, and 26% translate. (The most popular poets to translate are Cummings and Pound, followed by Rimbaud, Ginsberg, Yeats, Auden, Ferlinghetti, Montale, Perse, Dylan Thomas and Williams.)

—The poets are serviced by 109 little magazines, 46 literary reviews, 27 newspapers (where serious poetry does appear), 20 large or university presses and, curiously, only 11 small presses. (Perhaps we could export some of ours?) Familiarly, 61% have edited a magazine at one time or another.

—And they are starting young: 49% have published by age 21.

Such are the unforeseen by-products of economic development, as presented by Gabriel Zaid in the appendix to *An Assembly of Young Mexican Poets*, an anthology of 164 poems by an equal number of new poets. And in Mexico the book is causing a small uproar: predictable groans of "who'll read the stuff?" and "haven't they anything better to do?", plus the inevitable suspicion of poetry as a plaything for the rich in a land of nine million illiterates.

If this rate of growth continues, Mexico may become a nation ruled by poet-bureaucrats: a lyrocracy! Poor Plato. One wonders what the figures are for Brazil, Indonesia, Kuwait. Will the next century's UN be a Renga Club?

Suddenly the *Directory of American Poets* seems sparsely populated: even in pobiz the Empire is crumbling. Will our nonpareil President protect us by imposing stiff tariffs, or will US publishers increasingly turn toward products made cheaply abroad by poets who don't need the money? Into the future! △

Jimmy Rowles

by Dick Shreve

In every field of endeavor there are people who deserve less recognition than they have received, such as Lawrence Welk, Hitler, the Laverne and Shirley Show, etc. The list is staggering. Conversely, there are those whose lives are a sort of quietly magnificent understatement. This list is *not endless*

because we live in a world that does not reward excellence unless it is promoted vigorously. In basketball, Jamal Wilkes comes to mind. In the field of jazz piano, it's Jimmy Rowles.

Ask, if you will, or can, Billie Holiday, Sarah, Carmen or Ella who their favorite accompanist is. That's right—Jimmy Rowles. He's not wonderful because they love him—they love him because he's wonderful.

Now then, why is Jimmy Rowles wonderful? For openers, I'd have to say it's his sense of humor. Anyone who can write a country song called "The Ballad of Thelonius Monk" (recorded by Carmen McRae on Atlantic, SD2-904), has a mind that is more than capable of coming to grips with unreality. What makes this song so magnificently silly is the wedding of the two such disparate elements. On the one hand, musically there is the cowboy-country idiom with its right wing, simplistic flavor. Fused to this rustic setting is a super-hip lyric about how the horses, the boys in the bunkhouse, etc., are all hooked on the ultra-cosmopolitan, dissonant jazz songs of Theolonius Monk. This song is a definite clue to his humor.

I don't care who shot J.R., but one night in a justifiably homicidal mood *our* J.R. had a .45 automatic and a notion to "execute" an out-of-tune grand piano at the club where he had been playing. However, close friends prudently dissuaded him, although in my opinion the idea was not that out of line. Perhaps it is the tendency toward this sort of rebellion, his fierce integrity and his gruff voice that cause close friends to refer to him as "The Lizard."

In terms of sheer individuality one might almost say that W.C. Fields was the Jimmy Rowles of comedy. Jimmy has borrowed from other musicians' styles, as we all do, but the way he puts it together with his handy musical computer is unique. You can't hear Jimmy without knowing that it is Jimmy. He doesn't overwhelm you with the obvious cascade of notes that you get from, say, Oscar Peterson or Phineas Newborn, although he could. Jimmy has left out more good notes than most pianists have ever played. He underwhelms you with his uniqueness, harmonic structure, beautifully whimsical melodies, grimly Gothic voicings in the low register and his broad spectrum of emotions and moods.

Jimmy recorded "Like Someone In Love" with Ray Brown ("As Good As It Gets" on Concord Jazz, CJ66). Instead of your "normal" middle-of-the-road treatment of what is generally played as a pretty ballad or medium swing, Jimmy's irreverent sense of humor asserts itself. The result is that on the

first and last chorus you get a silly ragtime-stride version. He rebels against doing the obvious. Instead, his musical genius is able to transform and distort this lovely ballad into the musical equivalent of the Marx Brothers or Saturday Night Live.

It takes a huge amount of talent to distort a pretty song like this to the extent that he did and have the results be so wonderfully unique and yet musically valid.

One night Jimmy transcribed Coltrane's five or six choruses on "Giant Steps" from memory. This implies not only a very, very good ear but an amazing tonal memory. Anyone who could do this could play like anyone they wanted to. Instead, Jimmy has borrowed discreetly from the most valid of sources and forged these influences into a unique style.

Recording with piano and only one other instrument is rather like a quarterback and halfback trying to perform successfully with no offensive line. Jimmy Rowles has done this with Al Cohen, with Stan Getz and with Ray Brown, and just recently with Joe Pass. The records are all gems.

Each musician is the sum of the total of his parts. He is the result of formal training, what he has heard and/or studied, his attitude and temperament, his capacity to listen, his intelligence and his ability to express emotion, and humor.

Jimmy Rowles has a whole mental warehouse of sounds and styles that he has heard and assimilated. You can hear everything from James P. Johnson and Fats Waller to Thelonius Monk and Bill Evans. It is his musical taste and the mood of the moment that determine what will emerge from his fingers, heart, and brain.

He's standing out there now in the "left field" of jazz piano, playing what he believes, being believable to the best of the best musicians and being his own man. He's got a wonderful case of cantankerously terminal integrity and good taste.

Jimmy Rowles can be heard on many record labels. I have mentioned several. Others are:

"Paws that Refresh"—Choice—CRS 1023
"Grandpaws"—Choice—CRS 1014
"I Remember Rebop"—Columbia—C2-35381
"Tasty"—Concord—CCJ 122
"Heavy Love" (with Al Cohen)—Xanadu—145
"Stan Getz Presents Jimmy Rowles"—Columbia—JC 34873 △

The Dollmaker's Ghost. LARRY LEVIS.
Dutton. 1981. Selected by Stanley Kunitz.

In Winter. MICHAEL RYAN
Holt Rinehart Winston. 1981. Selected by Louise Glück.

Leaving Taos. ROBERT PETERSON.
Harper. 1981. Selected by Carolyn Kizer.

So This is the Map. REG SANER.
Random House. 1981. Selected by Derek Walcott.

Gumbo. GEORGE BARLOW.
Doubleday. 1981. Selected by Ishmael Reed.

by ROBERT PETERS

This second round of titles for The National Poetry Series is a clear cut above the first round. This is the series, as everybody knows, funded with thousands of dollars from James Michener, chanelled through 5 trade publishers, and disseminated far and wide. The winners of the open competition this year, as determined by Stanley Kunitz and Derek Walcott were Larry Levis and Reg Saner. The other 3 poets were sponsored. While there were no women selectees, feminists can take heart that there were two female selectors. Two of these poets have just reached middle-age; two are well along into mid-life; and Barlow's age is nowhere revealed. Perhaps the slackening of hormones, as the body ages, explains the passivity and graying of most of these books—muted whines of pain and failure, with an occasional bit of whimsy tossed in. These poems are primarily meditational and onanistic; and while they may pretend to much modesty, they seem to possess rather large egos. In days as threatening and raunchy as these, to find such poems showcased as fresh and new (as the initial prospectus, citing Michener, announced) indicates, I think, with the whunk of an arrow shafted through the groin, that American poetry is in sad shape. But, let's turn to specifics; there are some good things to note here, hidden amidst the detritus.

LARRY LEVIS, *The Dollmaker's Ghost*

On a scale of ten, Levis's poetry-energy quotient is about 4. He is a most

meditative, passive poet. He seems so overwhelmed and saddened by his eventual death (he's in his mid-thirties) that he sits for hours in parks, groves, and shopping centers, searching for symbols of his own emptiness. Hints of humor can't quite save him or his friends. Some of the latter are present in the flesh; others are recollected in a somnolent, gray tranquility. Levis's passivity he sees as a form of purity. To become *pure* we need merely to wait beside him for a few hours. At one point, Levis even becomes his own ghost, his real self having drowned, an apparent suicide. In the deep waters of the Auxvasse River, he finds great purity, as he passively rolls (and decomposes?) with the currents. The buoyancy of water, it appears, allows his body to immerse (oh boy, baptism!) as a final stage in self-annihilation. As the former dollmaker whose job it was to affix luminous eye-buttons in the skulls of dolls, he has become what the dolls seemed to require of him, that he be a ghost—just as they are themselves ghosts of humans.

Levis has models for his ways to death. A young couple, as a joke, strip, and, embracing, leap into a canal. Three days later they are found, still locked together, their arms "whitened," a reminisence, perhaps of the couple in D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. Levis imagines their deaths as devoid of struggle: "There were not words left/inside them," so they leaped. He recalls the poet Weldon Kees who parked his car near a bridge and, presumably, jumped over. His body has never been found. He also evokes the Russian Anna Akhmatova lamenting her incarcerated son. As she observes bloody horse-lips, and as white swan-skins dry above her head, she envisions her son's skin as snow.

Levis's poems are most alive when insects appear. His death-flies buzzing on window sills derive from Emily Dickinson. Bees and wasps recur, a fruit-moth collapses on a kitchen table. Ants proceed in a line down his hand. A scorpion surpasses the human because of its blessed "selfishness." Flies dance about on rocks. Levis is consistent: as an insectivore, he implies, man earns his sleazy place in the scheme of things. Even Levis's own eyes, because of his endless vigils, are crazed, he tells us, like a fly's. There seems no possible transcendance from the painful present.

How good is the writing itself, mirroring these themes? Solipsism, I fear, greatly mars the style, which does contain occasional fresh and good images. Levis seldom edits the "I," the result being a terrible flatness. Here is a sampling, all from one poem: I turn away. I stare. I listen. I hope. I forget. I

doze. I sleep. I dream. These are like water-drops hitting your skull at regular intervals.

MICHAEL RYAN, *In Winter*

Michael Ryan's *In Winter*, a brief 34 pages long, is really a chapbook. Because of its brevity, *In Winter* may seem better than it is. Self-obsession and passivity don't linger long enough to irritate us that much. Ryan, a fine stylist, is the best writer of this lot. Yet, his primary theme is hackneyed; during sexual and other intimacies the self remains in isolation, a condition Ryan seems to relish with something of an onanist's joy:

> Because I've awakened like this
> I think I could love myself quietly
> and let the world go on.

Madness crouches outside the window, leering like a dirty old man, arousing the poet. Memories betray. It is hard to recall a recent lover's smell, or the gut laugh of a friend. As the onanist-fever spends itself in the tiny explosions—flowers breaking ground—the poet is left sapped, hardly caring for ordinary things, unable to grasp feelings, not even his own. He becomes "daily flatness," and plays with himself some more. He is never immune from desperation. Even in love (nearly always recollected) Ryan's grief swells his glans. Our genitals are such small things, he notes; we should be ashamed of them. After sex, limp, we return to empty cravings for the transcendental:

> What a shame I am if, reaching the right woman
> in a dim room, pure sex holds itself appart
> from us like an angel in an afterlife,
> and with the ideas no one has even dreamed
> it wails its odd music for pure mind.

The pared writing and the fresh treatment of metaphysical themes save most of these poems—and their lambent sexuality is original. Ryan has brains, and he is tough-souled in his quiet way. He despises any ordinary Romanticism shot through with easy Platonisms:

> Who gives a shit about carcajou
> in the boscage, or pansies freaked with jet?
> I'd like to write a daylight poem
> that pretends the world's a good friend....

As he dances "towards the large," he scrutinizes the "thick dark" and finds

merely a "sorry entrance into absence." A lost key somewhere might lead him out of his white hell, if he can ever find it. Objects might provide clues: things reflect a dignity that lusting humans lack. A chair doesn't bend "silly like a rubber crutch," and a tree knows nothing about "the silky clasp of cunt." If he goes mad, Ryan hopes for the dignity of a chunk of wood. His lust would subside, and his dancing towards insanity, penis in hand, might metamorphose into the Eternal, reconstructing his ruined self. In that "overlay of silences," Ryan would not suffer as he now does. In the meantime, the jettings of his lust, those brief sperm-explosions, are as fragile flower petals barely appearing before dissolving as nacreous drops down Ryan's thigh.

ROBERT PETERSON, *Leaving Taos*

Robert Peterson's passivity is genial and winsome. I've read few poets who want so much to be liked. Peterson is ingratiating and unpretentious, is fond of the gentle life, digs booze, and likes being told you love him. His rhymes rip forth from the poet-cushion as soon as he sits down; viz., he sits in the "country chair/ memorizing a bit of Baudelaire." Why only a *bit*? Would a whole stanza be pretentious, or over-tax his brain? Peterson takes the hills of life "easy and slow." His aim seems very minor. The few events that do transpire, transpire "down the road," not in his life. Even when he's drunk he's never noisy. And in Mazatlan, where mosquitoes live on their nerves, each day, for him, is a comfortable routine of dinner and lunch "becalmed in bananas." Even the sunsets are re-runs. His poems too often wind down to throw-away effects. In "Hands Folded Like Napkins" the poet is in a dentist's chair, full of novacaine. What interests him is the nurse, a rather pallid sex-object. "She's built. Does she or doesn't she?" Well, who really cares? The arousal quotient here equals the quiver of half of a nostril hair, no more.

On another occasion, Peterson waits in a blue-collar bar while his suit is pressed. Isolated, and inspired by 3 beers, he produces an ineffectual piece of brain hops-foam: he can't explain his life. He's restless, he tells us, and when he's restless he turns to booze. What does he think about when he's soused? Well, one conclusion is that we live "in an age of prose" where poets people the streets with "stylish words."

Like Ryan and Levis, Peterson knows that life hurts. During a bout of insomnia, he percieves that he and his barber are smokers needing friends. His

cat has dished up another mouse, and his own "good and bad intentions cling together like wet leaves." At moments his loneliness disturbs his liver and forces him to a mirror or to "just any window" to get a "nod & wink" of assurance from his own friendly face. Now, that's charming, winsome, and sad. We want to help this nice guy. We don't want his bummer to grow worse. In "The Dog is Breaking Down" (yuk, yuk, folks, guess who the dog is?), the hound is a *loser* going nuts. When he's devoured his bicuits, he barks at the box. Only his fleas love him. Yet, he is a wise old dog because he seems to sense that he's doomed.

Peterson is best when he is charmed by some small object. "The Bird" is effective, dealing as it does with life in the small. Peterson stretches a wing, forms a small fan, and blows breath on it in order to *see* his own breath. In another poem, "November," he learns from his cat to dream of diamonds when "raccoons float through the night/ like warm bundles." There's an old poet Peterson evokes—A.E. Housman, of *A Shropshire Lad.* Housman's King Mithridates, that ancient king, saved his life by taking small draughts of poison each day. When a poisoner eventually tried to kill him, the King quaffed the potion, survived, and killed the would-be executioner. Housman also had charm and prized minute effects: cherry-trees in bloom, athletes dying young, the gentle urgings of lovers straight and gay—all evoking a hard stoicism. Life poisons one, Houseman knew, Survival is a matter of acquiring immunity by swallowing small traumas along the way, rehearsals for the climactic event. In the end, Peterson tells us, driftwood and icebergs will block us out. In the meantime, we survive by developing a stoical toughness and by being quiet. Like the old stray bitch dog missing her front leg, we too must stay private, content with our own meager bones and biscuits. (See "Lone Rider"). We suffer least if we shun any real connections or intense responsibilities.

Reg Saner, *So This is the Map*

While Reg Saner tracks deep signals emitted by "the profound I," he can hardly be accused of the passivity I have complained of in Levis, Ryan, and Peterson. For Saner, one feels, is never still for long, either when he's at home or off on of his treks in the Rockies. His poems abound with clean, fresh Rocky Mountain air. While he is an experimental and reflective poet, he eschews the direct use of the first-person pronoun, reserving it for the occasional moments when it really counts. *Is* are not scattered up and down

the sceneries of his poems like corn for hens and robins. Saner retreats to the mountains to enter the "solitudes" and renew his energies. For Saner, silence is a positive immersion in nature's grandeur.

Saner recalls John Muir rather than Wordsworth or some Oriental philosopher holed up in his hut on a mountian top. He is a realist who loves naming rocks, plants, animals, and trees; and whenever he is in difficulties on the trail, like Muir, he concocts practical means to resolve them. There's a fresh sanity here, without much mystical and metaphysical hokum. Nature is never a backdrop for the poet's ennui or self-pity. Saner relishes what he sees, even the grotesque: muskrat entrails are "a swipe of visceral glue." A deer hunter beheads and skins the animal he has shot. Later, as Saner drinks from a stream, he takes in "the smack of salt/ Deer's blood."

Saner's poems are well-crafted. His cadences are easy in their flow. He likes a semi-elevated tone, almost as if he were about to spin off another Shakespearian sonnet. Here's an example: "Out of a cold and absolute wind which the tongue blurs on." ("Anna Primavera"). While I find ending the line with the preposition a bit odd, *absolute* provides a touch of grandeur, and the main clause evokes a further elegance of phrase and rhythm. But there are risks; the cumulative effect of such openings is dullness. At his best, Saner deflects being boring by using sharp details. But poems so exclusively limited to the pursuit of Rocky Mountain highs run risks that all hikers and backpackers take—highs occur very infrequently. For the most part, vast hikes (and I've been on them) are sheer plod. Much deadening monotony of mind and body precede any transcendental spin. What saves Saner is his pragmatism. He knows, as Judith McCombs puts it in her fine book *Against Nature: Wilderness Poems*: "The mountain is a mountain; it has nothing to say to you." Growth occurs within our psyches; any generation of wonder transpires within the confines of our brains. If I read Saner accurately, this, it seems to me, is what he demonstrates. He may be writing the same poem over and over, but he writes it very well.

George Barlow, *Gumbo*

The final book in this current series, *Gumbo*, has a crazy energy and verve lacking in the other books. Barlow's style, as the jacket notes, is "masterfully aural." At his best, Barlow often blends humorous, frequently poignant portraits of family and acquaintances with his riff-cadences. Yet, despite my

enthusiasm for much of *Gumbo*, the book over-all strikes me as being to current poetry what talented Hattie McDaniel was to the movies—her roles were limited and predictable. For the past thirty years or so Black poets (I assume that Barlow is black, although nothing in the bio blurb says so) have written with a live audience in mind, to a combo beat. All to the good. Perhaps though, it's time for poets of Barlow's gifts to expand and take more risks. I am not urging him to write good Honky poems. There remains a flourishing black voice, and it should be heard louder than ever. Let me be more specific.

"Gas" displays the excesses of Barlow's manner: the poet sits rocking his eight-day old daughter. Daughter starts to smile. The poet's "woman" says it's gas in the baby's tummy that makes her smile, not "magic and love." There's "a jam on the jukebox" as "Cannonball cuddles" baby and daddy "softly in jazz." Result? It's really her old sentimental poet-father's "heartbeat" rocked by the tune "Two Sleepy People" that produces the tike's grin. There are at least three ladles full of treacle here—one for Cannonball, one for dad, one for the baby. It's too easy.

Whenever Barlow takes the clichéd way out, he writes badly; i.e. sentimentally. In a longish elegy, "Elegy: *Adiós Adiós*," he explains that life is about "loving and being loved." The folks you've been close to won't ever forget you, Barlow avers. You'll be like a big fish in the net of memories they'll pull in from time to time; they'll keep you in their hearts. Another poem, "American Plethora: MacCorporate MacDream" is a cute foray into Golden Arches Land. It's too much of a good thing, predictable and coy. It's a poem that undoubtedly goes over big at readings, since it requires no brains and makes for easy laughs. Perhaps Barlow's editors didn't really do their job; or, it is possible that he meant the book to be a gumbo, that thick okra soup of predictable and not so predictable ingredients.

But, again, on the positive side, Barlow is never vapidly solipsistic, grey, and enervated. I relish the stubborness of his Super-Bowl hero Duane Thomas who resits post-game Honky questioning by saying "evidently," and nothing more. I'm chilled by the death of a young guerilla in "Spouting Hearts Spouting Minds." The soldier is shot at close range with a pistol, and as blood spurts from behind his ear, he goes limp, is a washcloth. The resolution envelopes a stark racial hatred:

Some Americans could
drink from such an arch
by simply leaning forward
simply taking the blood in

The elegy "Main Man Gone" eschews any cheap tricks of event and language for the sake of power. And the featured poem, "Titta," about an old aunt who with her salt holds the family together, is a beautiful ceremony of recollection. Plenty of spunk and energy flashes through *Gumbo*. Perhaps in his next book (and I hope there are many) Barlow will be a bit more selective.

△

Finally, while this second round of National Poets Series titles is better than the first, these books still leave me hungry. I can only hope that as the series proceeds it will encompass more of the new, as it was apparently initially envisioned. As a showcase for the best in current American poetry, the series continues to fall seriously short.

▲

Panjandrum Books

NEW TITLES

Four Texts by Antonin Artaud,
Trans. by Clayton Eshleman & Norman Glass.
Four of the most impressive texts that Artaud completed at the height and end of his career. $6.95 pap., $12.95 cloth

Necrocorrida by Andrei Codrescu. $4.50 pap.

Chiasma by Paul Goepfert. $4.50 pap.

The Fighting Men by Willard Manus.
$6.95 pap., $12.95 cloth.
By the author of Mott the Hoople, this novel is about the impact of the Viet Nam war on a group of men who fought in the worst days of that war.

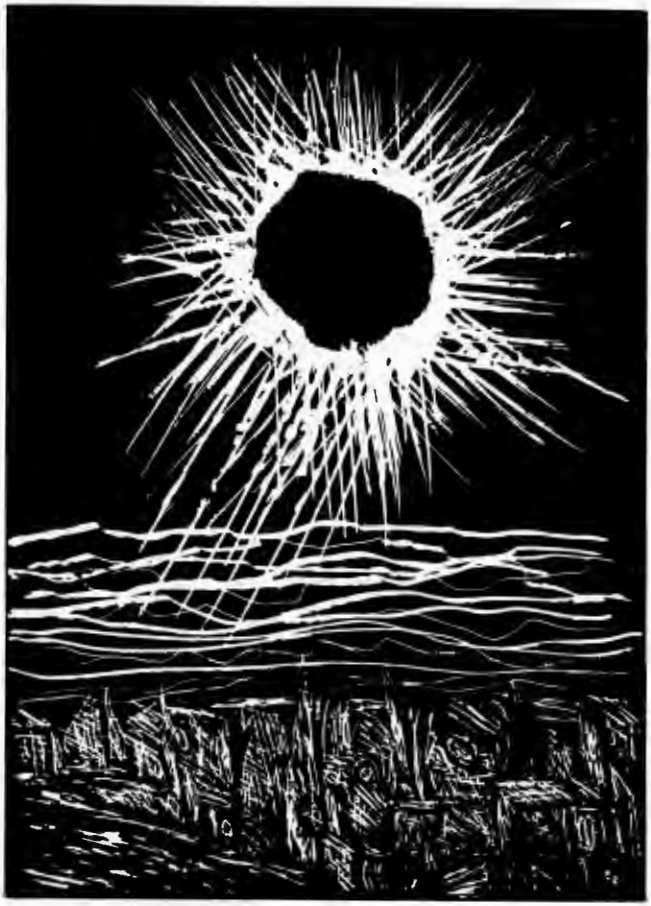
To order send check or money order to:
PANJANDRUM BOOKS, 11321 Iowa, Ste. 1, Los Angeles, Calif. 90025. *Write for free catalog.*

VESUVIUS DE LUXE

Bello Com'un Dio

Etchings by
ARTHUR SECUNDA

Impressions by
F.J. TEMPLE



Secunda, internationally known artist, has executed a startling series of 14 etchings that capture the power of the volcano. "He has seized the strident sky, the intensity of the sun — captured intimate energies, taken them apart and put them together again."

—F.J. T.

Temple, with the French forces in Italy, witnessed the last eruption of Vesuvius in 1944 and has written an unforgettable account of its beauty, fascination and horror.

14 original etchings 11' × 14", plus 16 letter-pressed leaves bearing the text, housed in a hinged box 17" × 20" × 1", silk-screened after an image created by the artist. All etchings are signed and numbered A to Z by the artist.

Price: $800. plus shipping
Write: Secunda, 1659-11 St.
Santa Monica, California 90404
Telephone (213) 452-5435

(Orders filled as available, first come, first served.)

Secunda

"A Clear Space"
original intaglio

published by: **Bolen Gallery**

Ocean Park: 213/399-9128
2904 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405
Bonaventure Hotel: 213/488-9731
404 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90071

Terry Allen, *A Regional Grouping*, 1975. (detail)

List of Exhibition Catalogs

$5.50	☐	**Barry Fahr, Tom Jenkins, Paul Ré**
5.50	☐	**Peter Lodato**
5.50	☐	**Jerry McMillan**
4.50	☐	**SITE: Buildings and Spaces**
9.50	☐	**Terry Allen (part of and some in betweens)**
11.00	☐	**Architectural Sculpture, Volumes 1 & 2** (M. Alexander, M. Davis, Fine, Nauman)
4.50	☐	**Jack Brogan: Projects** (Benglis, R. Cooper, DeLap, G. Dill, Gehry, Goode, Irwin, Pashgian)
5.50	☐	**James Reineking**
5.50	☐	**Richard Tuttle**
4.50	☐	**Trains and Boats and Planes** (N. Cooper, Goodan, Janss, Korten, MacCready, Maxim, Roloff)
5.50	☐	**Bruce Richards**
5.50	☐	**A Painting Installation** (Kaufman, P. Alexander, Bengston, de Kooning, DeLap, Goode, Hofmann, McCracken, McLaughlin, Moses, Olitski)
5.50	☐	**Bryan Rogers: Timepieces**
5.50	☐	**Laddie John Dill: A Survey, 1971-78**
4.00	☐	**Hans Haacke**
6.00	☐	**Robert Cumming and William Wegman**
6.00	☐	**The Poetry of Systems** (Fend, Horwitz, LeWitt, Lightbody, Shaw)
.75	☐	**Geoff Winningham and Jacqueline Thurston**
6.00	☐	**Michael Brewster**
12.50	☐	**Watercolors and Related Media by Contemporary Californians** (T. Allen, Bengston, Bieser, DeLap, Diebenkorn, Dole, Fine, Francis, Garabedian, Kanemitsu, Kaufman, Nauman, Oliveira, O'Shea, Price, Raffael, Richards, Ruscha, Thornycroft, Wiley, Wudl)

Price includes applicable taxes, postage, and handling.

WILLIAM BRONK

LIFE SUPPORTS

New and Collected Poems

Life Supports, the complete collection of William Bronk's poetry, celebrates the lifelong achievement of one of America's finest poets. The poems from Mr. Bronk's nine earlier books are collected here, together with thirty-four new poems. This volume of over 400 poems was designed and typeset by Martino Mardersteig at the Stamperia Valdonega in Verona, Italy.

"He is brilliant . . . he's the metaphysical Eliot asked for, mind and guts one thing." —*Southwest Review*

"William Bronk's poetry stands as an eloquent and often beautiful attack on all our assumptions, a provocation, a monument to the questioning mind. It is a work that demands to be read." —*The Saturday Review*

"One of our finest—though largely uncelebrated—poets." —*New York Times Book Review*

256 Pages, 6 × 9
Cloth, 0-86547-039-1, $20.00

N O R T H P O I N T P R E S S

P.O. Box 6275 · Berkeley, California 94706

$5.00